

Scotpress

Enterprise — Log Entries

60



a Star Trek
fanzine

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A ScotPress Publication.

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Enterprise - Log Entries 60 is available from

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6 Craigmill Cottages

Strathmartine

By Dundee

Scotland

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February 1984.

Hello, and welcome to Enterprise - Log Entries 60.

All of us at ScoTpress - myself, Sheila, Janet & Shona, and The Chain Gang - would like to wish you all the best for 1984 . To... Paramount with the Prophets of Doom, and (despite Orwell) let's enjoy it.

Speaking of The Chain Gang, our first contribution this week comes from that stalwart band, who decided to take a trip up Ben Nevis. Unfortunately, they picked a bad day, but despite the appalling weather, three of them reached the top, and the other two managed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the climb. A sterling effort. On their return they produced The Restaurant at the Top of the Universe. We hope that you like it as much as we did - and it proves that we do let them off the chain... occasionally.

Hope you enjoy the zine,

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Valerie', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Contributions of stories, poetry and artwork are always welcome for ScoTpress zines, and can be sent to

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WHATEVER THE PRICE

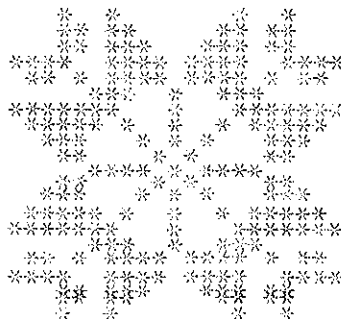
by

Gillian Catchpole

Tumbling though emptiness,
Lost on the shores of an ice-world kingdom,
Finally, always, irrevocably alone.
Distorted faces peered into his own,
With mouths too wide and bulging eyes
They loomed in and out of vision.
He tasted water moistening his lips,
Heard muffled voices far away.
"I'll go and call Jim, he's coming round."
He opened his eyes with sudden hope, before closing them tight.
"Doctor, you can't - Jim is dead."

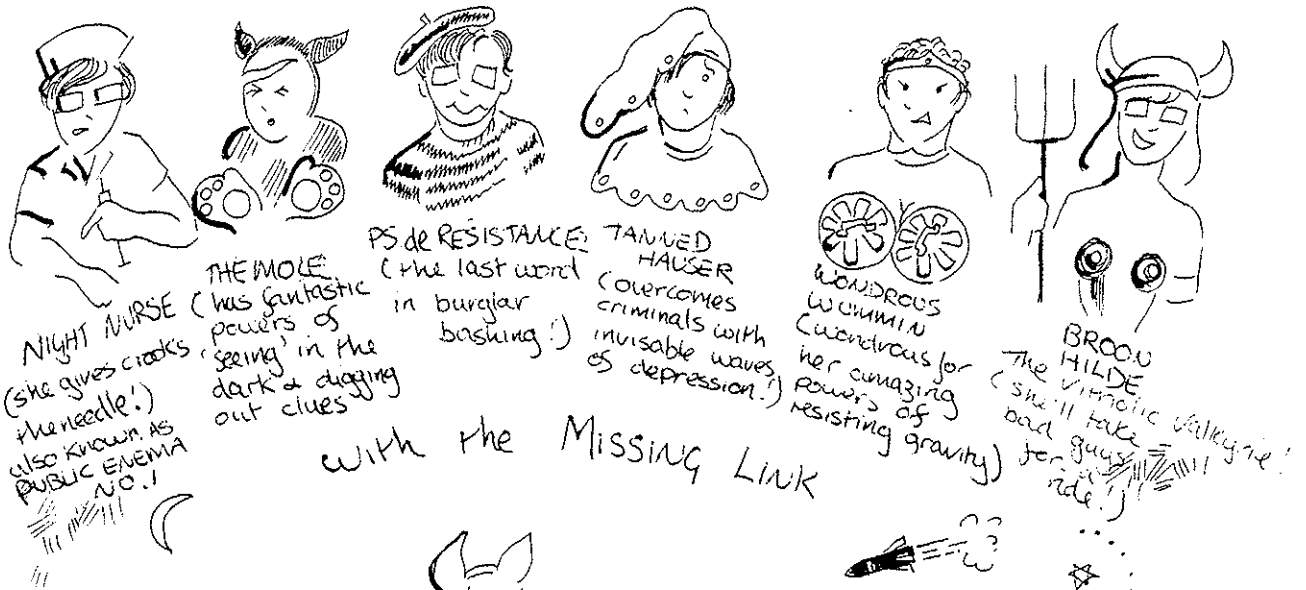
"Might I further suggest your duty towards me has come to an end."
"That's what this ship needs - someone else to tell me my job.
Come on, Spock, sit down and eat.
You've hardly eaten a thing lately
And you're spending far too much time alone.
Jim misses you, you know."
"Doctor, I assure you, I am fully recovered."
"Are you, Spock?
Illusions can seem like real and be just as painful.
Feelings of loss may be illogical,
But they show you care.
Being with Humans must have finally rubbed off on you."
"Tell me, Doctor, do you insult all your patients?"
"No, just the green-blooded ones."

He is my resting place,
My haven, where in times of storm
He offers shelter, safe from condemnation.
I am his to command,
The guardian at his side.
There will be a price to pay.
I have glimpsed a land
Where rock, not weathered by wind or rain,
Can be crumbled by sorrow.
The regret will, at the end, be as inconsolable
As the affection was infinite.



marvelous comics present ~

A chain Gang Classic



with the Missing Link



By Bron Hilde + Roo.

The Quest for The RESTAURANT AT THE TOP OF THE UNIVERSE!

The chain gang in their superhero guise are having a meal in their secret HQ - the bedroom furniture department of a well known store.



2.



The chain gang (minus the mole who went underground for this assignment) are sent in search of a ... Kerry Oct!

3.



In the voyage across the light years they find a problem in the navigation system.

4.



As the darkness lifts ML, PS and BH leave the shuttle for a better view!

5.

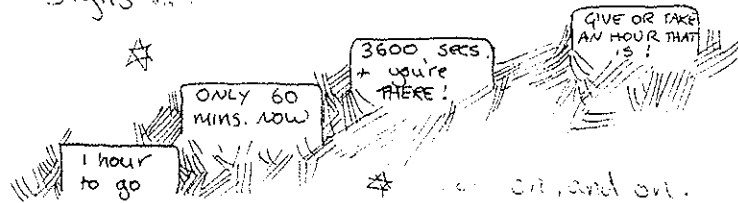


shuttle for a better view!

7.

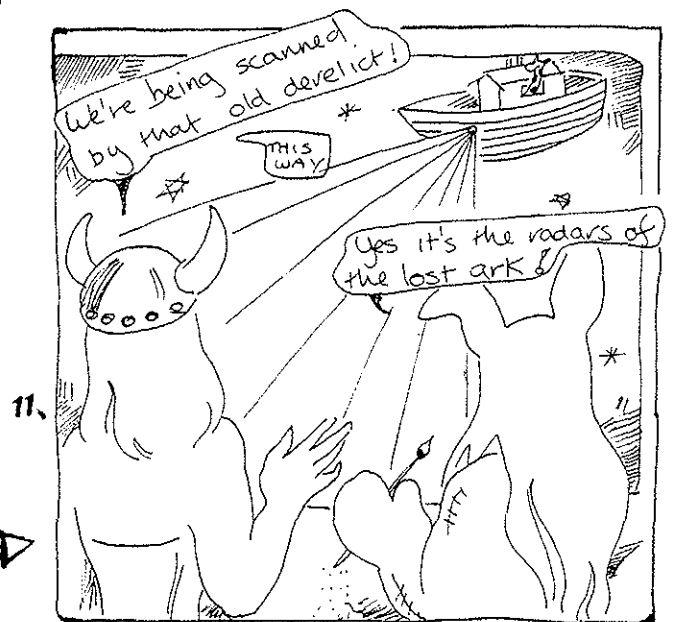


Now on the right route once more, the chain gang follows the signs ...

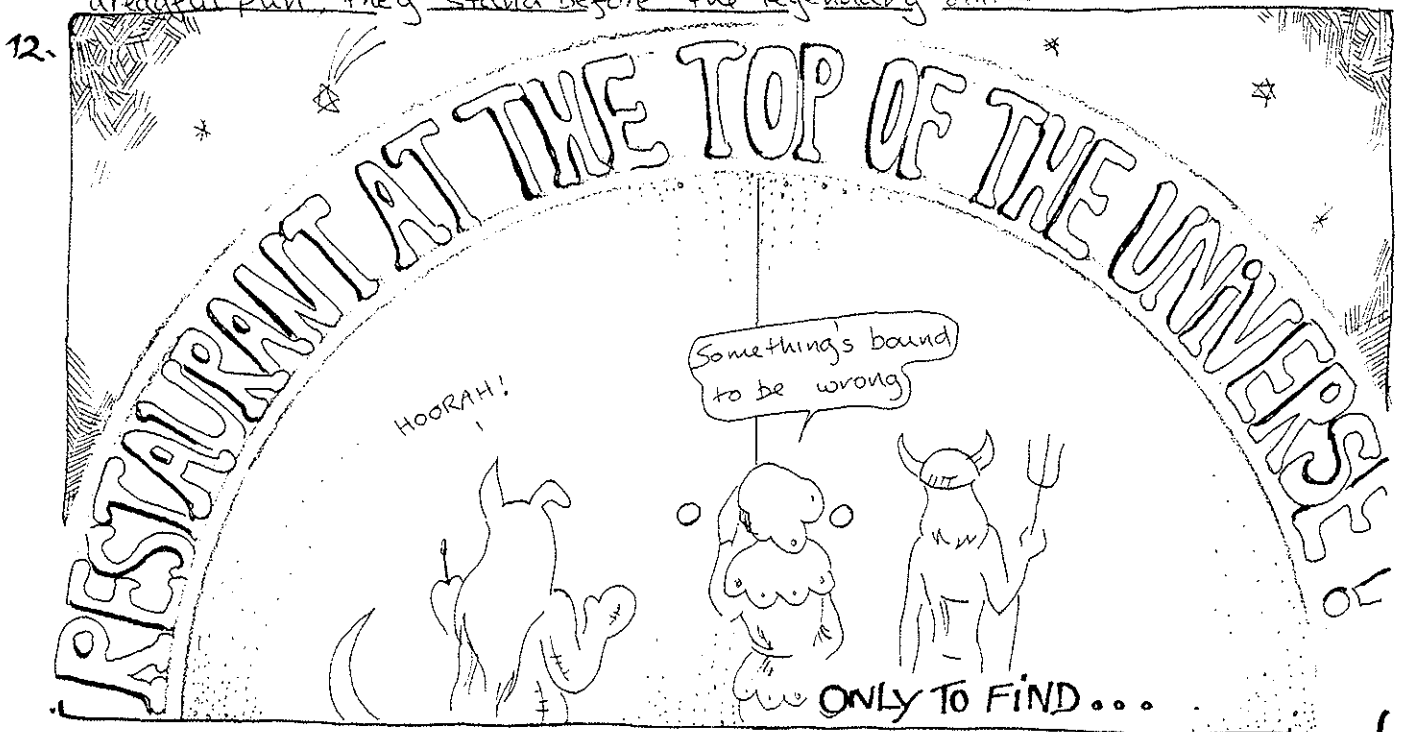




At that point the shuttle wanders into the path of a well known craft, mislaid from ancient times...



At last their suffering is thru', and after recovering from that last dreadful pun, they stand before the legendary...





The Intrepid 3 (with the not quite so Intrepid 2) arrive back at Base tho' not in the same condition as they left...



LETTERS TO JOANNA

Excerpts from a Starship Correspondence

by

Susan Neek

My dearest Joanna,

Well, here I am with yet another 'bulletin from space.' I've just arrived on my new ship which is, as you know, the Enterprise. It's my first posting as Chief Medical Officer, and I'm feeling a little nervous. I guess, though, that it won't be all that different from other ships I've served on, except that there are more people to get sick!

The Captain, whose name is Kirk, hasn't been here too long either. I gather he was the youngest man ever to be given command of a Starship, and I heard very good reports of him at the Starbase before I came on board.

The ship lost some personnel on a voyage to the edge of the galaxy, and is here picking up replacements. The Chief Medical Officer I'm replacing is retiring. I've discovered that the Chief Engineer, Mr. Scott, is an old acquaintance.

The equipment in my sickbay, where I'm writing this, and all the facilities in the research labs, seem excellent. All these are hopeful signs, I suppose, but...

I keep thinking, I wish I could be home now, watching you grow. You must be getting very beautiful (the pictures you send me tell me so) and I'm missing the joy of seeing it happen day by day. I wish once again that circumstances hadn't sent me out here to the stars and away from you.

I will try as always to make the best of this job, but it is, as I said, just another ship.

I love you and miss you very much.

Your affectionate Dad.

* * *

Dear Father,

in your last letter you sounded so disillusioned. Wow, a Starship! Some guys I know who are just entering Academy would give their eye teeth for a chance like that! You've never really sounded settled on any of your ships since you left Earth. A Starship is a different matter, though; with the distances involved it'll be more of a long-term affair. I just hope you can find a place on the Enterprise, Dad - a real place. What happened between you and Mom was an awful thing for all of us, but I can see now as I get older that maybe it was best for everyone.

On a more cheerful note, things here at school are great. Hard work, but plenty of social life! I'm still not exactly sure that I want to do with my future, but I know it will be something to do with medicine, maybe nursing. As you've always said, the greatest gift one can give humanity is to help save lives. And now I know I want to do that...

Your loving daughter,
Joanna.

* * *

Dear Joanna,

I'm beginning to think I could be on the best ship in the Fleet. We must have one of the best crews in the service. I'll tell you a little more about some of them.

Our Chief Engineer, Scotty, seems to be able to repair warp engines better than I repair the Human body. (I refuse to be modest - I did say better!) Only thing is, he sometimes tends to prefer the company of his engines to the company

of people (though I note the offer of companionship along with a bottle of Scotch has never been refused!)

My chief assistant Christine Chapel is a beautiful girl who's suffered a very sad loss recently, and has decided to devote herself to her work and career.

Our Captain, Jim Kirk, is, I'm beginning to think, a miracle worker. He seems to have a talent for pulling victory out of a hat when defeat seems imminent. He got us out of a difficult situation in the Romulan Neutral Zone by his skill at strategy, and pulled off what could only be a brilliant poker bluff against a seemingly threatening alien. I think he will also prove to be a good friend. He's a sometimes lonely, but very humane and sensitive man. The burden of command is a heavy one, and I think he enjoys our occasional drink and chat.

Our First Officer is a Vulcan called Spock, and you could say that we don't exactly see eye to eye on everything. I know that Vulcans respect logic, but this one is impossible! He's half Human, though you'd never guess. I've seen an iceberg show more feeling. It can't be right to suppress emotion like that when you're half Human. I keep telling him so, but nothing gets through the Vulcan shield. It's irritating, but I keep on trying. He has a talent for provoking me. Give him his due, though, he is very efficient and has the reputation of being the best First Officer in the Fleet. The Captain seems to think so, anyway; he trusts him a lot. His knowledge of computers and the Science Department helps the ship run very smoothly. I would never tell him so, of course - the insufferability of his logic would be more than I could live with!

I'm very glad you're thinking of medicine as a career. It can be hard work, but very rewarding. Anyway, my darling, let it be your own decision.

All my love,
Dad.

* * *

Dear Dad,

well, I've done it! I've enrolled for a course in space medicine, with special options for nursing and alien physiology. I thought... you might be pleased to hear. I must just make this a quick note - I have so much to study these days.

The Enterprise sounds great, especially your Captain. It's nice to hear you calling the crew 'us' instead of 'them'. And don't let that Vulcan of yours provoke you! Perhaps he secretly enjoys doing it!

Take care,
Jo.

* * *

Dear Jo,

it was marvellous to hear of your enrolment. Obviously you're going to be a 'real McCoy'! I wish you the best of luck, my love, with your future career.

Well, I'm beginning to find the universe is quite an incredible place. In these past few months I've seen things you wouldn't believe. Greek gods, silicon monsters who are really mothers, an eighteenth century squire who was really nothing more than a naughty boy, an energy life-form that gave up immortality to save a dying woman and find a special kind of love. These are all things I must tell you about more fully when I get back to Earth one day.

As time goes by I grow more and more convinced of the value of this man James T. Kirk. Not only as a commander and strategist, but as one of our 'ambassadors to the stars'. He seems to have a way with Humans and non-Humans that gets them to listen to him, and to follow. I think it is true charisma. The crew are starting to love him as well as respecting him. Even our Vulcan's affected, and admires him tremendously - in secret, of course. They seem to work together very well. I continue to get drawn into discussions with Spock about logic and emotion - in fact, about everything!

It must be spring now where you are. 'Oh, to be in England...' Was that Wordsworth, or am I getting my classics wrong again? Ha! You get spring; we endure the permanent chill of Vulcan frostiness! Although perhaps it melts a little, sometimes. I keep on trying...

With love,

from your ever-persistent Father.

Dear Dad,

this must be a very short letter. I never knew such a multiplicity of parts existed in Human and alien bodies, and I have to learn them all for mid-term exams!

Life on your Starship sounds varied and exciting. Makes me quite jealous of being Earth-bound (and exam-bound!)

Take care of yourself,

Love, Joanna.

P.S. Keep on taking the tablets.

My dear daughter,

where did you inherit such a strange sense of humour? Could it be from me? If so I shall shut up about the subject, and only add that you seem to be a 'real McCoy' in more ways than one!

You'll have heard by now about the Federation/Klingon peace treaty that's just been signed. Well, we were right there on the front line at Organia. Things were quite scary for a while, but it's nice to see the Organians keeping our friends the Klingons in check.

On a less serious note, Uhura - our Communications Officer - picked up a nice little furry creature called a tribble recently. It had a litter, and I was even thinking of asking for one of the offspring to send to you. I know how you love all animals, and thought it would make an ideal pet. Unfortunately, the trouble with tribbles is they've taken the Good Lord's commandment to go forth and multiply just a little too seriously. They caused us quite a bit of trouble for a while...

You should have seen the look on Jim's face when Scotty told him he'd attacked the Klingons because they'd insulted the ship, not because they'd insulted the Captain...

The look on Jim's face when all those tribbles fell on top of him was also a picture. He didn't seem to find it funny. Shot me a look like thunder...

Tribbles seem to like Vulcans - and so, I'm beginning to think, am I. At least you can always rely on them. I do still believe though that it's wrong for him to suppress emotion the way he does, and I'll go on telling him so.

'So I sent the whole kit and kaboodle to the Klingons, where they'll be ~~nae~~ tribble at all!' Huh! I could have thought of a more original line than that to finish off our tribble experience. Scotty says I'm just jealous because I didn't get the last word; but then, I'm never allowed to have it. Certain Vulcans seem to think they are becoming experts on humour. The trouble is, certain Captains sometimes agree with them!

Keep on taking the tablets yourself,

Love, Dad.

P.S. Are there no young men on the scene? Judging by your last photo, they need to see an optician!

Dear Father,

thanks for the gallantry. There are young men on the scene (as

you so quaintly put it) but I'm having too much of a good time and am too busy to see a lot of anyone in particular at the moment.

Can I please have a tribble? Sounds like the perfect sort of April 1st gift for our sergeant-majorly-type matron. Here's how I see it:

March 31st Give matron one small tribble, with best wishes from the student nurses. Instruct to feed well and keep in a safe warm place overnight.

April 1st Matron opens cupboard door. Matron finds her pet has 'extended its repertoire'. Tribbles are everywhere. Hairs all over matron's spotless uniform, tribbles are eating homework so diligently done by students - and so meanly marked by matron.

Please excuse the fantasies of one poor, over-worked, hard-done-by trainee nurse. I know I have a wicked streak, but it is not my fault. It is genetic - from my father's side, I believe.

If you cannot send a tribble, please send a nice-looking young man from your Starship.

Take care,
Joanna.

P.S. I have tried taking the tablets. It did not work.

Dear Jo,

I do not believe 'wicked streaks' are a genetic trait, but an acquired characteristic. In short, I disown you.

Actually, there is a 'nice young man' who's recently arrived on the ship who might fit your bill. He's very likeable, but the only trouble is, he is for Russia what Scotty is for Scotland. He seems to regard everyone but attractive young women as 'Cossacks'. While no doubt he would love to be posted off to you, I think a tribble would be safer.

Another 'nice young man' is Mr. Sulu, but he's too important to the ship as Helmsman; and I'm not too sure how I feel about oriental grandchildren...

I've been busy delivering babies on Capella IV, and having them named after me. Well, almost. How does Leonard James Akaar grab you?

Spock's been busy throwing himself in front of poisonous flowers saving Jim. I wish the pair of them would think before all their heroics that it's me who has to patch them up. No, I didn't mean that; it's just my usual attempt to be funny. Spock's actions were as usual only out of his concern for Jim, without any thought of self. Jim has been busy too, saving an entire planet from slavery.

Jim and Spock seem to work together better all the time. Jim seems to know all the right ways to get a response from him; whereas I... Well, I know he trusts me, and that's something I'm starting to value very much. It's just that at times he can still exasperate me more than anyone else I know!

Study hard, but remember to relax too.

Love, Dad.

P.S. Will not send tribble. Do not wish to be responsible for causing distress on my home planet.

Dear Dad,

I'm feeling very proud of my father at the moment. The other day there was an open discussion in our space psychology class and someone said, "Yes, but according to the paper on stress symptoms by Dr. Leonard McCoy..."

"That's Jo's dad," someone shouts, and the lecturer says, "The Leonard McCoy?" It seems that my father, some man named McCoy, is famous.

Things on the ship seem to be going well for you. All your talk of the stars is giving me wander-lust. I may try for a Starship when (or should I say, if) I get through my training. Anyway, there is plenty of time for that kind of decision later.

You might not know this, but Mom has divorced and remarried again. She just doesn't seem to be able to stay in a lasting relationship with any man these days. I hope it will work out for her this time. With her moving about, and my studies, we don't see very much of each other now.

Well, must go now. Why don't you send me your nice young Russian ensign? It might not be safe, but it could be fun finding out!

Love and peace,
Jo.

* * *

Dear Jo,
thanks as always for your letter, and sorry about the delay in replying, but I've had many things on my mind lately.

One day in your medical career, Jo, you may find you'll have to make a difficult decision or choice. I had such a decision to make when we were involved recently in a difficult situation on the planet Deneva. That decision almost cost Spock his sight. Things worked out in the end, thank god, but it still makes me shudder to think of what could have happened. He would have been invalided out of the service, condemned to a life of blindness. I try not to think about it. It was my fault, even though he tried to take any blame or guilt from me. Sadly, in the same incident, Jim lost his brother and sister-in-law, though we did at least manage to save his young nephew.

I've also been to Vulcan, but can't say anything about what happened there because it would be a breach of Spock's privacy, which I respect. Suffice to say Jim and Spock had a very trying time.

Jim also had to make a heart-rending decision, and lost someone he valued very much.

I'm sorry, my darling, that this sounds so vague, but there are reasons, both of security and privacy, that I can't tell you all. It's just that sometimes these letters to you are the only way I have of expressing things I can't tell anyone else. I hope you don't mind that, and I'm sorry if this letter is beginning to sound depressing and maudlin.

I hope as always that everything goes well with your studies and your life.

I love you,
Dad.

* * *

Dear Dad,

I was very sorry to hear about the Captain's brother dying; that must have been very hard on him. Also relieved to hear of Mr. Spock's recovery. I don't mind you not telling me about certain incidents; they are after all your friends and you must respect their privacy. At the same time, if things ever get a little rough, don't ever hesitate to put pen to paper. The rough has to be taken with the smooth, as they say, and what else are families for? This is the only way we have of communicating when we're so far away from each other, and we have to make the most of it.

I can't believe that after this lot of exams I will be in my final year. The thing is, since they discovered about my famous father, my lecturers seem to think I may actually pass all the tests for space service! Please pray for me that some characteristics are inherited; and go on being the best CPO in the Fleet!

With much love,
Joanna.

* * *

Dear Jo,

Thank you for your beautiful letter. I'm writing this while on Starbase Seven. Spock is with us, and while you may think this is some kind of 'first' (the words 'Spock' and 'shore leave' not being exactly synonymous) let me say to cover his Vulcan pride that he is here because of my medical orders. I want to keep a proper eye on him and make sure he gets some proper rest. (Stubborn fool wouldn't if I didn't watch him.) He's totally exhausted after taking a shuttlecraft into the heart of a giant amoeba creature that had already killed a Starship and a planetary system.

In fact, the whole crew are exhausted. Apart from this latest thing we've had one of the longest, hardest tours of duty we've ever had to face. We were involved in an incident in the Romulan Neutral Zone and got out by the skin of our teeth. Then it seemed that Jim had gone crazy, and was chasing an old obsession halfway across the galaxy; but it turned out he had a good reason. (I should have learned by now to trust this man's command decisions.)

We almost lost Jim to a race called the Tholians. At first we thought he had died, and I must confess that I didn't help things much. I gave Spock a pretty hard time until it was pointed out from an indisputable source that he needed all the support I could give him.

I think he's in line for a commendation for both the amoeba episode and the Tholian incident. If Starfleet has any sense, he'll get them. (Although if they can keep a crew on duty for as long as they've done with us, maybe they don't!)

Have you ever tried to keep down a Vulcan who's supposed to beresting? Talk about impossible tasks! Come to think about it, Jim always shows the same restlessness when under medical orders or in Sickbay. You'd think they'd appreciate being treated by the best CMO in the Fleet! (Thank you for the compliment, my love.)

Listening to the gossip around the Starbase, it seems the Enterprise has got herself a reputation as the best Starship in the Fleet. Also, now that Jim and Spock's loyalty to each other is becoming known, they're starting to talk about them as the best Command team in the service. In such ways are legends born. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that.

I wish that this leave would last long enough for me to come and see you when you graduate. I say when, not if, because I know you've worked very hard for this, and all it will take now to pass those finals is a little determination and stubbornness. And that, as I've been told many times, is definitely a McCoy trait!

Love,
Dad.

* * *

Dear Dad,

Thanks for your letter. Sometimes you get me so worried. You say, 'We had a little trouble,' or, 'a difficult situation', and I know that in fact you've been in great danger. I know you always try to hide the full import of that from me, but I know plenty about the risks of Starfleet life from friends I have in the service. I suppose that risk is the price you have to pay for the immediacy and excitement of life on a Starship. Well, I must be crazy (maybe that runs in the family too!) but I've decided it's the life I want. If I can only pass those finals!

Since my last letter I've been home for a holiday to Georgia, staying with friends. It was beautiful as always, but the lack of your particular brand of Southern charm made it incomplete.

At the moment I'm here on Callisto, spending three weeks on my last 'practical' in the research labs. There are some Vulcans working here. At first, like you, I found them a little irritating, but as I've got to know them I've found they are very good scientists and extremely helpful.

One in particular, Sepal, has been very courteous, and taught me a lot about scientific method. I happened to mention the other day that my father served with a Commander Spock. He said Spock was one of the most respected scientists in the galaxy. Maybe your idea about legends isn't so far-fetched after all.

I wish I had the faith you seem to have in my passing those finals. I get more nervous all the time. But I will do my best and try to make you proud of me.

Take care,
Joanna.

* * *

Dear Jo,

by the time you get this you will probably be fully qualified. I wish I could be there at your big moment.

I'm sitting here at the moment in my inner office, none too fine an example of the Hippocratic tradition. There is a young man called Kevin Riley outside waiting to be cured of laryngitis. I've left it to Chris, I'm afraid. I think I'd be too tempted to leave him the way he is. I believe I'd be doing the ship a favour. The rendition of 'I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen' he goes into at the drop of a hat has to be heard to be believed.

The hardest job of the year is coming round soon, chasing up Jim and Spock for the regulation check-ups. They think I fuss too much, but... I don't want anything to happen to those two. I found out recently on a planet in the Minarian system that I have the two best friends any man could ask for.

We are just leaving a planet which could effectively be called 'New Rome'. A whole world where the Roman Empire has never fallen. Fascinating, but frightening, too. While I was there I learned something about Spock that I never realised before.

We still have our 'fights', as Jim calls them. I prefer to call them debates. Sometimes I know Spock enjoys deliberately trying to provoke me! There are some things we may never agree on, but somehow... it doesn't really matter any more.

It seems such a long time since I last saw you. I don't know when we'll be able to get together again. I hope it will be soon, Starfleet and Fate permitting. I don't know where we'll be journeying to next. There's some talk of the ship hosting an ambassadorial delegation travelling to the conference centre at Babel; and even of some new computer fitments that might make Starship crews obsolete. (Heaven forbid!)

I do sometimes get the feeling my fate is bound up with Jim's and Spock's. I sense that they're going to do very important things, for the good of the Federation. I'm glad I'm along for the ride.

Every time I get one of your letters, I think it may tell me you're engaged or married, or even that I'm going to be a grandfather. (And I look too young to be a grandfather!)

All my love, as always,
Dad.

* * *

Dear Dad,

I've made it! I've qualified! I still can't believe it myself, but I'm now waiting for my first posting off-planet for advance training...

There is a man in my life now. (I got tired of waiting for you to send me Ensign Chekov.) I think you'd like him; he's a doctor, but of mineralogy, not medicine. He has suggested getting engaged. I don't know yet, with my career just beginning... It's something that I promise I'll think about very carefully.

I've been looking back through some of your old letters, from the days you first joined the Enterprise. So much has happened since then. Here am I about to go off to the stars, and you... seem to have found a real home on the Enterprise at last. I'm very glad about that.

There have been many times in the past few years when I've wanted advice, or just to talk to you, and I wish you'd been here on Earth. I know, though, that if you'd stayed here you'd never have been able to recognise your ambitions or use your talents the way you have in Starfleet. And probably you would never have found the kind of friends you have. The dangers you've gone through have bound you together more securely than anything else could.

I hope life will bring us together soon. Until then, take care; and as the Vulcans say, Live long and prosper.

I love you.

Joanna.



IN THE FUTURE

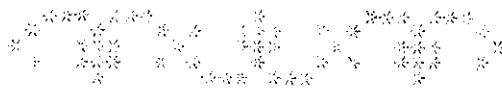
Is this the last dream
That man will ever have?
To reach for the stars,
To live for the future?
Is there nothing more to achieve?

It makes me sometimes think
That perhaps all the work and strife
Have no real purpose.
Will there be success in what we aim for?
Or do all our hopes end here?

My deepest personal dream
Is to find real peace
In my life, and in my universe,
And to be able to share it
With all whom I may meet.

I have confidence that I will find it!
There are many worlds, and peoples,
And amongst them I must find one
With whom I can share it,
In the future...

Karen Hayden



"Does the Security Chief know about this?" Kirk asked, surveying a rockfall.

"He ought to," the guard replied gloomily. "He's underneath it."

THE WIZARD OF ZO

by

Linda C. Wood

"Captain!" Lt. Uhura swivelled her chair to face her commanding officer. "I'm picking up a faint signal at the outermost extremity of my scanners."

"Put it on audio please, Lieutenant," replied Jim Kirk.

A faint suggestion of sound was heard. Hmm, thought Kirk. "Sounds like a regular pattern of sound. Mr. Spock?"

"Affirmative, Captain, but it is no known galactic sequence, sir."

"What is its bearing?" asked Kirk.

"Two parsecs, 253 mark 4, Captain."

"Thank you, Mr. Spock. Mr. Sulu, alter course to 253 mark 4, ahead warp factor 2."

When the Enterprise came out of warp they were 50,000 standard miles from the energy source.

"Analysis, Mr. Spock?"

"The signal sequence has not altered, sir. I'm switching to the Grayson Universal Translator for a probable decoding. Residues of an ion trail are present, but our scanners do not indicate the presence of a ship."

After a few clicks and squawks the translator burst into life with the message, "Mayday! Mayday!"

"Lieutenant Uhura, open hailing frequencies; and tie in the universal translator, Mr. Spock. This is the Starship Enterprise. Please identify yourself."

With a fizzle and a pop and a smell of stale oxygen a being materialised directly in front of the command chair. Kirk jumped to his feet, and Spock was beside him in an instant, but before either of them could touch the apparition he fully materialised and collapsed in a heap at the Captain's feet.

"Bridge to Sickbay - get up here fast, Bones!"

Kirk reached down to turn the crumpled form over. The being wore a full-length multi-coloured gown, a red and black one piece suit, and a hat with two peaks on it. His face was humanoid, with slightly pointed ears and a brown complexion.

McCoy was there in a moment, and shot a hypospray into the man's arm. Slowly he came round and opened his eyes. Kirk and McCoy gasped in surprise - the alien's eyes were completely golden, with no whites showing at all. Beautiful eyes, hypnotic eyes, cat's eyes. He was trying to speak, but the sounds were garbled.

"Spock, the translator."

Spock supplied a miniature package and handed it to the man.

"Boy, am I glad you came alone!" The translator was doing its task well.

"Who are you, and where do you come from?" asked Kirk.

"I am Zorath, of the planet Zo of the Rimworlds."

"I am James T. Kirk, commanding the Starship Enterprise of the United Federation of Planets. This is Commander Spock, my First Officer, and Dr. McCoy, Chief Medical Officer of the Enterprise." Formalities over, Kirk probed further. "What happened, and where were you bound for?"

"We were a spaceship of the Rimworlds Federation, and we were coming into Federation space as ambassadors of peace. We were, however, attacked by a ship

emblazoned like a bird of prey. We repeatedly told them we were on a peaceful mission, but they did not understand us and commenced firing, destroying our ship. We took to the individual escape pods, and that is how you found me. I hope I have not inconvenienced you in any way, Captain."

"No indeed, Ambassador Zorath. The race you encountered were the Romulans, who are hostile to the Federation. Please do not judge us by their warlike attitudes."

McCoy helped Zorath to his feet.

"My pod's oxygen/nitrogen atmosphere had deteriorated to the point of causing unconsciousness, Captain. Truly, you came just in time. I would, in some small way, like to repay your kindness in rescuing me. Have you found any other of my colleagues' pods?"

"No, not yet, Ambassador. Mr. Spock, please scan on a wide base for similar Mayday signals. We do not wish repayment, sir; we are just grateful to have saved you. We are en route to Starbase 20. I shall send a subspace message on before us to inform them that we have a special guest on board, and perhaps we shall further escort you to Federation Headquarters. In the meantime, I think Dr. McCoy wished you to go with him to Sickbay."

"Yes, Jim; I'd like to check him over for any after-effects of oxygen starvation."

"Very well, Captain, I will go with your doctor. But there are many things I would like to discuss with you, not the least of which is the method by which I may repay you for my rescue."

McCoy and Zorath disappeared into the turbolift, and Kirk turned to Spock, whose eyebrow did its best to disappear into his fringe.

"He seems genuine enough, Spock. Don't you agree?"

"I had the strangest... sensation... when I looked into his eyes, Captain - hypnotic, I think you would describe them."

"Ahhh, come on, Spock, you're just an incurable romantic, that's all!" Jim's eyes were sparkling.

Spock did not rise to the bait, but his other eyebrow followed the first into his hairline, followed by a slight pouting of his lips as he returned to his station.

* * *

Meanwhile, down in Sickbay, Leonard McCoy was giving the once-over to his newest specimen of alien, all the while chatting in his best bedside manner.

"Well, sir, you appear to have most things in the same places as most of the Federation races."

"I'm relieved to hear it, Doctor. Tell me, which world is your First Officer from?"

"Spock? That pointy-eared... Oops, sorry, Ambassador. I just like making fun of that Vulcan. He comes from the 40 Eridani system, where they have copper-based fluid that passes for blood in their veins and minds like computers." McCoy had reached Zorath's eyes, and was looking down his ophthalmoscope into the depths of the cornea. "One of my fondest wishes, Ambassador, is for that lanky, green-blooded son of a Vulcan to spend a little of his time as a Human..."

The golden eyes blinked once, and seemed to change colour to brown for an instant before returning to gold again.

"Hey, what did you do there?"

"I believe, Doctor, I have found a way of repaying your kindness in rescuing and succouring me."

"What do you mean, Ambassador?"

"Let it be my little surprise, Doctor."

And Zorath said no more.

* * *

Up on the Bridge Spock recoiled from his scanner as if he had been shot, cracked his back into the protecting rail, and collapsed unconscious over his chair.

"Spock!" Kirk was at his Vulcan's side immediately, gently easing him down to the ground and turning him over, while the others on the Bridge looked on in horror.

Something was wrong with Spock's face - his ears were rounded, his eyebrows too, and his skin was a deep sunburned brown colour. Spock had all the characteristics of being an ordinary Human male.

Kirk's lower jaw parted company from his upper jaw in an expression of speechless surprise, and his mouth was still in that position as Spock's brown eyes flickered open.

"Jim?"

"Just you rest, Spock. Something... strange... has happened to you."

"I feel fine, Jim, just a little weak, is all. Why are you looking at me like that?"

There's nothing else for it, he'll have to know, thought Kirk. Out loud he said, "Lieutenant Uhura, do you have a mirror handy?"

She did, and handed it to her Captain, who held it in front of Spock's face. Spock's jaw did a repeat performance of his Captain's, then snapped shut.

"I'm... Human!" The disgust in his voice was all too apparent.

"Now, Spock, don't take it too bad. Maybe it's not for keeps!" Kirk's eyes were sparkling again, and he felt laughter bubbling up inside him.

Spock did a quick internal examination. "My heart has changed position - so have my other internal organs!" His horror was complete.

"I'll get you down to Sickbay, Spock."

"There's no point, Captain. McCoy cannot give me back my Vulcan physiology. I shall resume my duty immediately, if you don't mind."

Kirk waved a helpless hand as Spock resumed his position. "Very well, Mr. Spock. Mr. Sulu, ahead to Starbase 20, warp factor 2."

"Aye aye, sir."

Sulu, Chekov and the rest of the Bridge crew tore their eyes away from the transformed figure of their Vulcan First Officer, only to be returned to him when he swivelled in his chair towards Kirk.

"Captain, as I have somehow taken on Human form, I would be grateful if you would henceforward address me as Commander Grayson - I wish to take on my mother's name."

"Oh. I see, Mr. Spock - sorry, Grayson. Do you intend taking on a Human first name, too?"

"I have long admired a soldier in your Earth's early 20th century history - Lawrence of Arabia. My first name shall be Lawrence, Captain."

"Lawrence." Kirk's eyes were twinkling again. "Larry for short, huh?"

Spock's slightly less athletic eyebrows rose together, the dark head nodded, and he returned to contemplating the readouts of his computers.

* * *

The only thing of Spock's/Grayson's that had not become de-Vulcanised was

his brain, and very quickly he was turning over in his brilliant mind the cause of the anomaly - turning over all the possibilities and finding that, once again, two and two made six. How often had he heard McCoy saying that he wished Spock could be Human? Had he said it once too often in front of someone who could make that wish come true? The hypnotic eyes of Zorath - they had hidden depths...

Yes, that was it. He swivelled in his chair to address Kirk, opened his mouth, then just as suddenly closed it again.

"Permission to leave the Bridge, Captain?"

"Yes, Commander... er... Grayson." It was near the end of his watch anyway, thought Kirk, and he had had a bit of a shock.

Spock took the most direct route to his cabin, passing no-one on the way. Word had got round the ship already, of course, but although the grapevine was excellent, so was the crew's sense of discretion.

In his cabin, Spock hit his intra-ship intercom. "Spock to Sickbay."

"McCoy here."

"Ah, Doctor McCoy. Spock's voice was as smooth as silk. "Is Ambassador Zorath still in Sickbay?"

"No, Spock, he's in Stateroom 1. Why do you ask?"

"I would just like to ensure that... all is well with him, Doctor."

"Well, he passed A1 through my examination, Spock, but you mean arrangements for his comfort, don't you?"

"Yes, Doctor. Thank you. Spock out."

Good, thought Spock, he hasn't heard about my... alteration yet. Must act fast, though.

Spock opened his cabin door, looked both ways, and finding it clear, quickly walked the few yards to Stateroom 1. He palmed the chimes.

"Enter."

Spock stood framed in the doorway. Zorath gasped at the appearance of the First Officer.

"Why Mr. Spock, what has happened to you?"

"I think perhaps you know, Ambassador. Did Doctor McCoy say to you that he wished I were Human?"

"Why yes, as a matter of fact he did, Mr. Spock. Are you not pleased at the alteration?"

"No, I am not. With respect, Ambassador, you had no right to perpetrate this transformation without the consent of the recipient."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Spock. I can, of course, return you to your former self forthwith..." He made to approach Spock, but the Vulcan put up a restraining hand.

"Wait, Ambassador. Can you repeat the exercise, this time making Doctor McCoy a Vulcan?"

"Why, yes. Do you wish me to do that?"

"For how long can you maintain the transformations - both mine and Doctor McCoy's?"

"For as long as you wish, Mr. Spock."

"Very well. Please do not alter me back just now. I wish to... experience... being Human for a short time. We will arrive at Starbase 20 in three days time; by then, if not before, will you return both me and Doctor McCoy to normal?"

"I shall, if that is your wish, Mr. Spock."

"This is your way of rewarding us for rescuing you, is it not?"

"It is, Mr. Spock."

"As I suspected. Will you now please turn Doctor McCoy into a Vulcan?"

"Approach me, Mr. Spock, and look deep into my eyes." Spock felt the hypnotic pull from the beautiful golden eyes. "Now, wish your wish."

"I wish Doctor McCoy to become a Vulcan." Spock saw the eyes blink, turn to brown, then return to gold again.

"It is done, Mr. Spock."

"Thank you, Ambassador."

And Spock/Grayson turned on his heel and walked back to his own cabin.

* * *

Down in Sickbay the grapevine had reached Nurse Christine Chapel, who gasped in shock at the news, then scurried in to tell Dr. McCoy. She found him slumped at his desk unconscious. She reached out to touch him, and he groaned and came to, lifting his head, a disorientated look in his blue eyes.

Christine screamed - her boss had turned into a Vulcan! Sallow skin, pointed ears and eyebrows, the lot.

Speechless, she took out a mirror and handed it to McCoy. He screamed, too. Once Christine had persuaded him to come out from hiding under the diagnostic bed, she hit the intercom.

"Captain Kirk, will you come down here, please?"

"What's the matter, Nurse?"

"Please, sir, just come down - it's an emergency!"

The scene that met Kirk's eyes on arrival at Sickbay made the Captain collapse in hysterics, which did not improve the temper of the unfortunate Dr. McCoy, who was trembling with reaction and rage, which made Kirk think,

He's trembling like a Vulcan jelly - lime flavour, I presume. And the thought sent him into further fits of laughter.

It was then that Spock/Grayson strolled into Sickbay, and the sight of him in his Human form made Christine gasp with pleasure.

Why, she thought, he's GORGEOUS!

The look was not lost on Spock/Grayson, who filed it for future (but not too far in the future) reference. Spock/Grayson lost the battle to keep his face straight at the sight of the Vulcanised McCoy, and found laughter bubbling up inside him. Christine again registered a first at the sight of Kirk and his First Officer hanging on to each other, tears of laughter streaming down their cheeks.

"When you two laughing hyenas are quite through," McCoy's acid voice cut in, "would anyone care to hazard a guess at how this has happened?"

Spock turned on an innocent face as his Captain looked at him, shrugging his shoulders and holding up his hands in a 'Don't look at me - I don't know' expression. Kirk, however, had a pretty good idea that he did know.

"Well, Bones," said Kirk, wiping the tears of laughter from his face, "it looks as if you're just going to have to get used to being a Vulcan till we can get to the bottom of this."

"It may not be too bad a deal at that, Jim. I can carry out one or two little experiments on myself that I couldn't ask Spock to subject himself to."

"A Vulcan trait already, Bones? Insatiable curiosity! Don't do anything I wouldn't do!"

"I have no intention of..." And he broke off as Kirk and Spock again collapsed in hysterics.

Christine, casting increasingly more admiring glances in the direction of the laughing Mr. Spock, was returned to reality when McCoy said,

"Christine, that will be all for tonight. I'll carry out my experiments on my own, if you don't mind."

"Oh no, Doctor. Goodnight, and I hope things have returned to normal in the morning." This time she felt like joining Kirk and Spock in the laughter stakes, and all three left Sickbay with severe imprecations floating downwind from McCoy.

Christine headed for her cabin, Kirk and Spock, now off duty, headed to the main Rec room.

"Now that you're Human, Mr. - ah - Grayson - maybe I can beat you at tri-D chess for once?"

"You proceed from a false assumption, Captain. Although my body has become Humanised, my brain is still completely Vulcan. Nevertheless, I accept your challenge."

As they entered the Rec room together, Spock/Grayson was immediately the centre of attraction, all the ladies in the crew quickly falling for the flashing smile and quiet laugh of the ex-Vulcan as they congratulated him on becoming Human at last. Somebody called, "Give us a song, Mr. Spock!" at which Kirk spoke up.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Spock has asked to be addressed as Commander Grayson, the name of his mother, as he is now a member of the Human race."

Bending to pressure, the new Human took the proffered syntho-guitar and started strumming, then he sang - he sang for over half an hour, to the pleasure and entertainment of all attending.

Kirk, amazed at his friend's repertoire, said in an aside, "I've never heard any of these songs before."

"They are my own compositions, Captain."

"We must get you on the tri-D when we get back to Earthbase - you could make a fortune as a TV star with these songs."

With a shy smile, Spock/Grayson laid down the syntho-guitar. "If you don't mind, Captain, I wish to retire for the night - it has been an eventful day."

"Yes, of course, Commander. Goodnight."

* * *

Half an hour later Christine, relaxing with a coffee in one of the smaller rec rooms before retiring, heard a soft step behind her.

"Mr. Spock!"

"Yes," came the deep-brown voice in reply.

He was wearing a one-piece, midnight-black figure-hugging Vulcan cat suit emblazoned with silver ancient Vulcan script - and the widest, most radiant smile Christine had ever seen. Offering her his arm in chivalrous fashion, he said,

"May I escort you to your cabin, Christine?"

"I would be honoured, Mr. Spock."

And, arm in arm, they left the rec room...

* * *

The next morning, before the start of their duty shift, Spock/Grayson buzzed his intercom. "Spock to Captain Kirk."

"Yes, Mr. Spock?"

"Can I speak with you for a moment, please?"

"Come through, Spock."

The adjoining door swished open. Spock was still Human.

"It's Zorath, isn't it, Spock?"

"Yes, sir. It's his way of thanking us for saving his life - presumably his race has quite a sense of humour."

"Indeed, Mr. Spock; but perhaps it is time to return things to normal. I assume that is possible?"

"Yes. Before I turned the tables on McCoy I asked Zorath. He admitted it, and said he'd change us back whenever we wanted it. Shall I request his presence here?"

"Yes, and bring Bones up, too. Heaven knows how he must feel."

"I know."

"Yes. Go ahead, use my intercom."

In a few minutes McCoy and Zorath were standing in the Captain's cabin.

"Zorath, Mr. Spock has informed me that it was you who made the transformations possible. Would you now please return these men to their former states?"

"Yes, of course, Captain. I have been most impressed with the way you and your crew have handled the situation. Your diplomacy is of the highest standards, and the Rim Foundation will be honoured to join the Federation - if the Federation is willing to accept us, of course."

"I shall set the diplomatic ball rolling when we arrive at Starbase 20, Ambassador. Meanwhile, please do the needful for Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy."

"Gentlemen, please look deeply into my eyes, and wish for your return to normality."

Suddenly Spock and McCoy felt the same electric shock vibrate throughout their bodies and they collapsed on the deck, unconscious, recovering a few moments later to their accustomed appearances.

* * *

Ambassador Zorath was welcomed by the Federation representative on Starbase 20, where negotiations were commenced for the Rimworlds Foundation to join with them.

* * *

Later, Kirk, Spock and McCoy were relaxing in the Officers' Mess of the Starbase with glasses of Saurian brandy in their hands.

"Incidentally, Doctor McCoy," Kirk said in his best 'Starship Captain' voice, "I trust that all your self-experimentation on Vulcan physiology met with success?"

"Indeed, Captain. In fact, I asked Christine to cook me up some of Spock's favourite brew-up, plomik soup. And whaddaya know - Vulcan taste buds are real sensitive to that stuff. It smelled and tasted like nectar - I could grow quite addicted to it... if'n I had stayed bein' a Vulcan, that is."

"Ah yes, Christine. Speaking of whom, Mr. Spock..." A Vulcan eyebrow escalated and the slightest tinge of green coloured the sallow cheeks. "I called at your cabin late last night, and you were out."

"Indeed, Captain. Like Dr. McCoy, I considered it opportune to conduct some of my own... experiments."

"Mr. Spock, you look like that cat that got the cream. I trust your..."

But Kirk had caught McCoy's laughing eyes and, amidst gales of helpless laughter, Spock rose straight-backed and with an expression of immeasurable hurt walked out of the mess, his sensitive Vulcan hearing catching McCoy's last word.

* * * * *

You kiss me
And I tremble in your grasp
As your eyes pierce me
With an awful thirst.
My eyes close...
I am tired, Kirok... I rest...
Yet I am glad.
Each kiss... is as... the first...



SOULS IN "

by

Karen Hayden



The dimmed lighting in his cabin did little to ease the storming emotions deep within the Enterprise Captain, and made him feel no better about what had happened just hours before.

Spock had died. Died!

There was no denying the fact. And it had been at his command. There had been no accident to help him accept, no galactic twist of fate, nothing to justify what had occurred on his beloved Bridge. Spock had died, and he had had to stand by and let it happen.

Kirk stirred restlessly upon his bed, allowing his mind to replay the scenes in Sickbay once again. He couldn't forget the look of pure horror on Bones' face as the doctor had realised what had happened, as he had realised that the receptacle in which Spock's consciousness had been housed had been destroyed.

At the time Kirk had believed there to be no other way, had had to accept what he had thought was an inevitable occurrence, had even accepted the open condemnation from McCoy. But now...

Things were different in retrospect. Could he have done something else? Held out a little longer before agreeing to what he'd reasoned was their only alternative? It hadn't been easy to make that one command decision which would have destroyed his life - he knew that if Spock had died then what made Kirk the man he was would have died too, even if his body hadn't. But he had had to make it...

Admittedly his Vulcan friend was well and truly alive now, but that had only been possible because of the miraculous intervention of Sargon and his unbelievable, inexplicable powers. He had been the one who had had to allow Spock's death, who had made the Vulcan's life forfeit in order to save the ship, and perhaps millions of lives, from the insanity of Henoch and his plans. He, James T. Kirk, who had professed to be Spock's friend - almost his brother - had agreed to it because...

Because there had been no other way.

He realised that anew. It had been the misfortune of life which had placed Henoch's soul within Spock's body, and he had made a command decision, the only one possible under the circumstances. That knowledge should have made the Enterprise Captain feel better. It didn't.

He clasped his hands behind his head, eyes fixed on the ceiling, and allowed the feelings of guilt and remorse for what had happened to them to run through his mind, tearing at his heart and soul. It felt good to know that Spock was safe in his cabin next door, that the Vulcan so obviously accepted what had happened to him - to them - as part of the life that they led aboard their beloved ship, but Kirk, restless, ill-at-ease, suddenly realised that he had to discuss it, talk it over - and with Spock himself.

Swinging his legs off the bed and pushing his hair back from his eyes he headed for the door, decisive, but halted before it opened. What could he say? How?

"I'm sorry I killed you, Spock. Will you forgive me?"

He snorted with derision, and began to pace back and forth, his hands behind his back. His Captain's shirt had been discarded, and anyone seeing the dejected man 'walking the boards' would never have recognised him as the ship's Captain at all. His face was haggard, his forehead creased with concern and worry for the future, when similar decisions would have to be made. How many times would he have to sacrifice his friends, put them into danger? How many more times would he be able to survive it? His hazel eyes dulled, as if focused on the inner pain,

and he continued pacing the floor.

Many minutes passed before he halted suddenly and reached for the brandy bottle with shaking fingers, pouring himself a generous measure; but before the glass reached his lips he rejected the idea, knowing he could not hide behind the stupor of alcohol. Instead he reached for his robe, shrugging into it, knowing what he had to do, yet fearful of the consequences.

Several hours had passed since Sargon and his wife had departed the Bridge and gone into oblivion together. The thought of that oblivion frightened Kirk, yet above that fear was an over-riding knowledge that he too would be willing to enter that state as long as he had Spock at his side. He couldn't help doubting that Spock would feel the same way about him after what had happened. He and Spock had had no opportunity to discuss the occurrences of the few days that Sargon had been aboard, for Bones had bundled Spock off to Sickbay, fussing over him like the proverbial mother hen, and later McCoy had confined the Vulcan to his cabin for total rest.

Kirk, forced to remain in command until they were sure that the crisis had well and truly passed, had had to watch him go. He'd spent those hours in his command chair, guilt beginning to take root. He had indulged in the wonders of being one with his ship, admittedly, but even that had paled because Spock was not with him to share it...

Being together, with Spock at his side, was all that mattered to him. He accepted that now. But would that new realisation affect his ability to command? Could he make another decision like the one he had made to allow Spock to die?

Kirk clasped his hands together in frustration, looking around his cabin. Now was the time to talk. He had to. The door slipped quietly aside and he found himself outside Spock's room, pausing only a moment before pushing the buzzer to ask for admittance. The door slid open immediately.

This cabin was even darker than his own, its interior bathed in the familiar soothing red of Spock's home world. The atmosphere immediately helped Kirk, soothing his concerns into a more bearable ache, and he found himself sighing in relief, the frown disappearing from his brow for the first time in all those long hours. He stood just inside the door for a few seconds more then, having sought his friend in the restful gloom, he drew forward a little.

Spock sat at his desk, hands steepled before him; he looked at his friend, no surprise whatsoever on his features. The Vulcan had obviously been expecting him, had known who it was asking for admittance outside the door. Affection for the Human softened his features. Their eyes met, words unnecessary, and Spock rose to face his friend on equal terms, understanding Kirk's hesitance.

Jim's voice was soft, quiet, when he found the words. "Bones told you to rest."

Spock took a deep breath, then swallowed, turning away slightly, noticing the teasing note in Kirk's voice. "The doctor's concern is noteworthy, Jim, but unnecessary. I am... fine."

Kirk noticed the hesitation, and doubt clouded his eyes. Glancing sideways, Spock saw, and sought to reassure him.

"I have been sleeping. I was somewhat fatigued. Now, however, is the time for meditation, and..."

Jim cut him off. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you. I could come back..." He moved towards the door, but Spock stopped him with a raised hand, a small shake of his head.

"Jim, allow me to finish. I need to meditate, yes. But I can also see your need. To talk, to be here. I, too, would like to discuss... what happened."

"Is there anything you do not see, my friend?" Kirk's head rose, and again their eyes met, both searching, both seeing.

Spock did not answer, but instead turned, resuming his seat, and drawing another chair nearer to his, gestured towards it. "Come. Sit down. Talk."

"You make it sound so easy..." Kirk had stiffened, but he did as he'd been bidden and sank into the chair, his hands loosely held in his lap. "I don't think it is."

"Why? We have never had any problems talking to each other before."

"Nothing quite like this has ever happened before!" Jim's voice had risen considerably, and Spock's eyebrow with it. The Vulcan's calmness somehow intimidated Kirk, and he rose to his feet, beginning to pace the floor again.

Spock watched him, remaining where he was, ever tolerant, fully cognisant of the emotions which were threatening to tear his friend apart. He was unsure how to help Kirk, to ease the pain he so obviously felt, but he did know that it was best to let him speak in his own time, to let him work it all out slowly. But he also sensed that in the circumstances it might help if he took the first step to broach the subject. He drew a deep breath as he took in the hazel eyes, so dark, their spark gone; then he too stood, going to the Human, halting the incessant pacing, holding tightly to Kirk's arms.

"Jim. Jim! I didn't die."

Kirk looked so vulnerable as he returned the gesture by holding onto Spock's shoulders, giving support as well as receiving it, beginning to draw him close. Then he pushed Spock back and looked deep into the dark, dark eyes, taking in the oh-so-precious features before him.

"Oh Spock... You could so easily have... I killed you. Me! Your friend... Huh, great friend I turned out to be!" He pulled away from Spock, putting distance between them but still looking at him.

"I gave the order! I allowed the destruction of the receptacle, of... you! I didn't know there'd be a miracle to save you... If Sargon hadn't... If Christine..." The words refused to come, and his breathing quickened as he returned away helplessly towards the wall.

Unseen by Kirk moisture began to fill those dark eyes as Spock realised anew just how much this man cared for him. He followed Kirk, closing the distance between them again, standing just behind him; but Spock could not touch the tense, dejected man before him, not this time. Instead he found himself able to find the words that Kirk could not.

"Jim, we will not survive if we go on fearing each day because of what might happen to one of us, because of the fear of... of losing each other." He took another breath. "We both chose this life, and we must accept what each day brings. There is constant danger - to both of us..." He put purposeful emphasis on the word 'both', attempting to prove to Kirk that he feared losing him as much as he feared losing Spock. "...but you are the Captain of this vessel, with over 400 lives in your hands, and you must go on making decisions which will affect the enterprise an all aboard her, the whole galaxy and its inhabitants. You know you cannot let the life of one man come between those decisions and those responsibilities. To ensure the safety of all those people and planets you will sometimes have to risk your life, and mine. I must accept that... and so must you."

For a moment Spock feared that he hadn't reached Kirk, that Jim would not answer, but then he did speak, even more quietly.

"I do know that, Spock. And of course I accept it. I don't need you to tell me what I already know..." He began to turn. "But sometimes..." Facing Spock again he continued, his voice stronger, "...I care about you, my friend. I care so much... I almost lost you to that amoeba..." He said it angrily. "You almost died on Neural. How many more times will I have to risk you?"

"As many times as are necessary, Jim."

Kirk nodded sadly, and grew silent again as each allowed the other to ponder what had been said.

Spock had one thing on his mind above all others. 'I care about you, my friend.' Kirk had said that out loud. And he had meant it. And Spock knew that he cared, too. He remembered all the past missions when Kirk himself had been hurt, or lost, or at risk. He remembered how he had almost killed Kirk with his own bare hands... A similar discussion had taken place then, but it had been Spock who had gone to Kirk, Spock who had instigated the baring of their souls. It had been Spock himself who had needed and received Kirk's help then...

The Vulcan smiled, and Kirk noticed, wondering what had caused his friend to display his emotions in such a way under the current circumstances. Questioning with his eyes, Kirk asked Spock.

"Jim, we are indeed two halves which make a whole. Though from different planets we are from the same mould, you and I." They drew close again, everything shut out, their attention focussed totally, completely upon each other. "We care so deeply for each other. But we must not let that caring destroy us, what we have. We must learn to accept each day and what it brings, and not to fear. We must cherish each moment that we are together, and cherish them for the day when we will no longer be so."

Kirk was absolutely delighted to hear his friend utter such words, and in pure joy grasped each word, caressed it, and stored it away, knowing each one was precious indeed. There was a betraying moisture accumulating within the hazel eyes, but the spark had returned to them, the life was back within them with the realisation of the truth of Spock's words. Spock had been able to put everything back into perspective again, was able to renew Kirk's faith in what he had known all along. And Kirk knew in those few seconds that they would survive, that they would cope with what was to come, that he could command.

But he needed more, and Spock noticed it with the hesitation, "But..." which Jim uttered. So the Vulcan tried to give it to him.

"No buts, Jim. I am not dead. We are still together. That's all that matters, isn't it? That we are together?"

Kirk smiled, and whispered, "Together."

Then, in mutual agreement, they approached the alcove where their chess set was waiting for them. No more words were needed. The future would still hold the risks, dangers for them both; there would still be an underlying fear that one could lose the other at any time.

But they would survive, and carry on. Because when it came down to basics all that mattered was that they were together, that they had each other; and though it hadn't been voiced, they both knew that even death would not separate them.

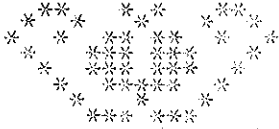
They would always be together.

*** **
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THRENODY

Sheryl Peterson

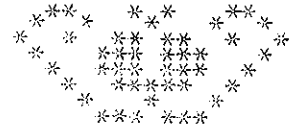
Will you leave us
To explore a galaxy
Where we can't follow?
To walk alone again
In places even you can't know?
Must we lose you,
As we lost you once before,
But now forever?
Ask of us whatever you will,
But Spock,
We beg...
We plead...
Don't go.



Stowaway

by

Janice Pitkethley



Do they think I am stupid? I have known for some days that something is going on. All those cases for travelling...

Last night when they were all asleep I entered the house and examined them thoroughly. My nose told me what I wanted to know - Spock's clothes are in there too, so they are taking him with them. I know my master Sarek is often absent from home, but not Spock. Not my little friend.

Sleep will not come as I ponder these strange happenings to the best of my intelligence. My thoughts bring sadness, and I begin to howl; I cannot help it.

After a while The Mother Amanda appears at a window on the upper floor. "I-Chaya! Be quiet!" Her voice is stern, and I cease my howls, knowing I have done wrong.

Sleep still refuses to come. The night is hot, and the scent of the nocturnal flowers is overpowering as I prowl around the enclosed grounds, my restlessness continuing. I find myself beside my master's aircar. His scent is very strong here, and lingers although he is absent.

I have a strange compulsion to enter this craft which flies in the sky. I climb into the rear compartment and find a place where many things are stored, some of them soft. I turn around, trying to make myself comfortable, and the panel slides shut with a soft click. I rest my head on my paws and fall into a sound sleep, all fears and troubles forgotten.

A sense of motion wakens me. Within the compartment it is still dark, and I realise there is no way out. I am trapped! Still, I can hear the voices of my Master, The Mother, and... Spock! Rescue is at hand! There is a lot of bumping going on, and I am thrown against the wall of this little compartment, hard enough for my poor nose to be painful from the impact. My Master usually handles the craft better than this! Then, I hear loud banging noises, the engines have stopped, and we have come to rest on something different. I can tell by the sound, but what it is I do not know.

All is silent again. I am alone, trapped in this darkness. I begin to howl and scratch at the panel for release until my paws are sore and bleeding. No-one has heard me. I am well and truly alone!

What is this new menace? I hear the roar of engines, much louder than those of my Master's aircar, and the vibrations of movement. It is not the aircar which is moving, but something else. How can this be? It is beyond my understanding...

* * *

How long have I been in this prison? It feels like I have been trapped here forever. I am hungry and very thirsty, my throat too dry and sore now to even whimper, let alone howl. Why don't they let me out? Spock has never gone away and left me like this before...

* * *

Time passes in a haze. All I can do is lie and doze. I am too weak to attempt any more. The motion and the engine noises change several times, but I am beyond caring.

* * *

Voices bring me from my stupor - well-loved voices. If I fail to attract their attention and let them know of my presence this time I will surely die.

"...Awwooo..."

The howl has taken the very last of my strength...

* * *

"I-Chaya!"

I hear Spock call my name. I can smell my Master's scent too, and hear scraping noises as they work at the panel. At last the hatch slides back and I snap my eyes tightly shut as the light floods in, blinding me.

The Mother is there also. She speaks soothingly to me, and I feel my fear and distress slowly ebbing away.

Several people come to assist my Master in the task of removing me from the aircar as I am too weak to stand and my bulk means I am heavy. They put me in some kind of shelter, then food and water are brought to me. I eat and drink until I almost burst! Now sleep is overtaking me, but it is a good sleep, and I know I will feel better when I awake.

* * *

"I-Chaya..."

Spock's voice brings my eyes open and a contented rumble comes from my throat as I feel his hands upon me, combing the tangles from my matted fur. It makes me feel better, so much so that I get up and shake myself, loose hair flying everywhere. I even manage to knock Spock down in the process. Oh, I am so happy to be freed from that prison!

"Come, I-Chaya." He playfully pulls my ear. My legs are still a little bit wobbly, but I manage to follow him to the doorway.

... what the...???

A wave of terror engulfs me and my ropey tail creeps between my legs as I sink down, whimpering. Where are we? It is cold, much colder than I have ever felt before... the feeble sun... the different scents. Everything is wrong; even the air smells different, and... ALIEN!

"This is Earth, I-Chaya. Where my mother comes from." Spock reaches up to lay a hand on my trembling back. I even have to struggle to breathe here; the air is thick and cloying, threatening to choke me.

"Steady, I-Chaya," Spock warns me as a stranger approaches with my Master. The stranger is of the people like The Mother, and I sense his fear, although he means me no harm.

"The aircar was brought here so that the scientists could compare the differences between the designs of Vulcan and Earth transport. The sehlat entered the rear compartment before our departure and became trapped. We were unaware of his presence." My Master spoke to the stranger.

"A sehlat..." The stranger gingerly touched my head. "I have heard of them, but this is the first time I have ever seen one. Poor old chap..." He continued to ruffle my ears, bringing a croon of delight from me. "Think what he must have suffered, trapped in an aircar which was in the ship's hold."

"It was most unfortunate," my Master agreed.

"I still have to check him over. Should he be carrying anything harmful..."

"Vulcan has no animal diseases," my Master replied. "However, you must conform with Terran laws. Proceed. He will not resist."

The stranger did not touch my head again, but passed something over me. It made a warbling sound, which was most disagreeable to my ears.

"He is clear."

They walked away, leaving me with Spock, my little friend. He refilled my water container, leaving the door to the shelter open. He knows I dislike being confined, especially now, after what I have been through. I know not to follow him as he leaves me and enters the house - if that is what it is. Such a strange building - not at all like home! Only one thing is similar; the grounds are securely enclosed, and I know I must remain within. What dangers would await me should I venture out into the unknown? It is too cold to do much exploring,

anyway, and I much prefer to stay in the shelter with its warm bedding.

* * *

Light comes again. Today the feeble sun is stronger somehow - not much, but it is like the first stirrings of spring at home, and is almost warm on my fur as I stand in the doorway. I allow myself the luxury of a good scratch, then turn to sniff the strange scents the breeze brings to me. The gateway from these grounds is standing open! Memories of my cubhood come back to me as I make my way towards this interesting opening. The entrance to the lair always lured me then as this gateway is doing now. I cannot resist it.

Caution... All my senses are on full alert for danger as I leave the safety of the enclosed grounds and take my first steps out into this strange new world. How different it is from home! Home is much cleaner, and less noisy. I feel my fur bristle as the unknown sounds reach my ears.

Here comes trouble! A strange creature is running straight for me - an enemy! I crouch defensively as it circles me, making yapping sounds.

So. Do you want a fight?

I growl and swipe at it with a paw. It turns head over heels and runs from me with its tail between its legs. Shrill piercing cries come from it as it disappears from sight. That will teach it better manners!

Those strange and tantalising scents are becoming stronger now. I pause to sniff the air once more, and turn in the direction they are coming from. A strange sight meets my gaze. I find myself in some kind of covered walkway, but with buildings on each side; and the entrances to those buildings are where most of the fascinating scents are coming from. I shall investigate further...

Spice cakes! The aroma from the delicious things The Mother makes at home is very strong now. The scent leads me through a doorway where...

I cannot believe my eyes! Spice cakes and other goodies are here in their hundreds. People run screaming as I help myself; shelves topple to the floor with a crash as I stand on my hind legs to reach a more impressive display. I like it here!

People crowd around the doorway, but no-one dares to come near me as I sit and gorge myself. My fur is all matted and sticky, but who cares about little things like that? Mmmm... lovely!

I am full now, and settle down among all the debris. People are still peering in the doorway and staring curiously as I try to lick some of the sticky mess from my fur. Can't they give a fellow peace? You would think they had never seen a sehlat before...

Oh-oh! The silly chattering people withdraw to make way for three men. They are officials of some kind, and I sense they mean to do me harm. If only I hadn't eaten so much... I open my mouth to growl and warn them to mind their own business, but all that comes out is a huge yawn.

One of the men points something at me, there is a sharp stinging pain in my shoulder and suddenly I feel... so... sleepy...

* * *

Where am I? I am surrounded by animals similar to the one that attacked me earlier, but am separated from them by a clear partition. Stupid things! All they can do is to stand on their hind legs and make yapping sounds at me.

I growl at them, and they all back into a corner. There! That will teach them not to annoy a sehlat! One of the officials comes by and looks in at me; I treat him to a display of my fangs, and he departs hurriedly.

"I-Chaya!"

I croon in delight at the familiar voice. The official has returned with my

Master and Spock. They have come to my rescue yet again. I am so glad to see them that I rush forward as soon as the door is opened. Freedom!

I turn in circles, crooning in delight. My bulk knocks Spock off his feet. I often do that, accidentally of course, as he is so small and does not have much weight compared to grown-ups. I turn quickly to lick his face in apology - and down go my Master and the official!

"Kroykah!" My Master's voice commands sternly, and I cease my capering immediately. He is most displeased! I cower in shame, realising I have just deposited my Master in a most undignified fashion on his Vulcan rear. I hear a muffled sound, and feel Spock's small hands digging into my fur while he buries his face against my neck. Most strange... then I realise he is laughing!

My Master brushes dust and straw from his clothing as he enters into a long discussion with the official. Spock has recovered himself by the time I am put into an aircar for the journey 'home'. Although it is not my home, I am pleased to see it once more.

* * *

I am tethered now by a stout chain which rattles most unpleasantly. I know I have brought this upon myself by going exploring on the outside, and they dare not risk another escapade. Still, it is not too bad here; my fame has spread, and a lot of people come to see me, most bringing good things to eat. I am none the worse for my sojourn in the dog pound - whatever that is.

* * *

Yesterday I saw the travelling-things being packed again. I have heard the word 'Vulcan' mentioned a lot, and that means home.

They won't forget my visit to this strange place they call Earth - but I'll tell you, just between you and me - they don't half make good spice cakes!

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MOK TIME REMEMBERED

Joyce Devlin

T'Pring, you challenged.
WHY?
Your choice -
My Captain, my friend.
Yes,
Faultless logic.
But I have killed
My closest friend.
Live long and prosper, T'Pring
For I shall not.

JIM!
You're meant to be...
Dead.
HOW?
Oh, I see.
Doctor,
My thanks.
Your logic,
For once,
Was faultless.

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Sulu: When you sing you remind me of a pirate.

Riley: How come?

Sulu: Murder of the High C's.

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NO VISIBLE RECORDS

by

Liz Butler

Uhura listened intently, making minute adjustments and flicking the ear-piece in irritation. "There's something there, sir, but I can't quite pinpoint..." She stopped abruptly and leaned forward to make a further adjustment. "Coming through now, Captain. Shall I relay it?"

Kirk nodded. "Thank you, Lieutenant. Put it on the main viewscreen."

The starfield vanished, to be replaced by a view of the interior of a ship. Only one man was visible in what was obviously the pilot section of a small private cruiser. Blood seeped from a bandage round his head, and his skin was a deathly grey. His voice when he spoke was hoarse, his breathing laboured.

"Mayday... Mayday... Request help... urgent... If anyone can hear..."

Kirk flipped a switch. "This is Captain James T. Kirk of the USS Enterprise. If you will give me your coordinates, we'll be with you as soon as we can."

The man looked up and straightened with obvious effort. "Thank goodness... I was... beginning to give up... hope..." He broke off, pressing a hand to his chest. "We need help... we have... been attacked... please..."

Kirk leaned forward. "Please give me your coordinates," he repeated slowly.

The man pulled himself erect and turned to look at a screen, reading off the figures with grim determination. Kirk glanced across at Sulu, who nodded in confirmation.

"Course laid in, Captain."

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu. Implement immediately, warp 4." He examined the man on the screen closely. "What happened, Mr....?"

"Seymour... Professor Martin Seymour. I... have been working on... Beta Cyran... on a formula for a... a..."

The screen blanked and Kirk swung to face Uhura.

"I'm sorry, sir. Transmission's been cut."

Kirk stared at the viewscreen, now reverted to the familiar star patterns, in frustration. "Mr. Sulu, increase speed to warp 5. Lieutenant Uhura, keep trying to re-establish contact."

* * *

The ship was small, sleek - and very expensive. That much was obvious at first glance. It was also - just as obviously - severely damaged and drifting.

"Analysis, Mr. Chekov."

The Russian looked up from the viewer. "The hull is damaged, as we can see. No motive power, minimal life support."

"Survivors?"

"Yes, sir. Two sources, one of them very faint."

The Captain rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "I don't like the feel of this. What's it doing there? Where did it come from? Who attacked it?" He sighed. "Any sign of any other ship in the vicinity?"

Chekov studied the readouts intently. "I... I'm not sure, sir. There is some sort of trail... it could be a departing vessel, but it's fast disappearing."

"Hmm. Well, those people are our first priority. Scotty, is it safe to bring it aboard? It won't blow up on us or anything?"

"Well, sir," answered the Scot slowly, scanning his board minutely, "it should be safe enough. There's hardly any power registering at all. Shall I

operate a tractor beam, Captain?"

Kirk made up his mind. "Yes, Mr. Scott, bring her aboard." He rose to his feet. "Mr. Chekov, come with me. Uhura, alert Sickbay. Have Dr. McCoy report to the hangar deck immediately. Mr. Sulu, you have the con."

* * *

Kirk greeted the doctor with a brief smile. "How's Spock?"

McCoy grinned back. "He'll be okay. I've always said that Vulcan's damn nigh indestructable! Anyone else taking that charge from a blow-out in Engineering would probably be dead now. Him... he's just badly stunned and has a severely burned hand. So you can quit worrying."

"Thanks, Bones."

"Don't mention it." His eye travelled along the sleek lines of the small craft before them. "What do we have here?"

Kirk followed his gaze. "I'm not sure, Bones. The occupants sent out a distress signal, but the man collapsed before we could get any details. Said something about having been attacked, and by the looks of things, the attackers weren't playing."

The outer hull of the small craft gave mute testimony to his words. The surface was pitted and scarred, and the gaping hole in the side made their hearts sink as they thought of the passengers.

"Do you suppose they're still alive?" murmured the doctor quietly.

Kirk braced his shoulders purposefully. "There's only one way to find out." He stepped forward and pressed a palm to the opening mechanism.

With a soft hiss the door slid open and the two men stepped inside. The silence was oppressive as they made their way forward to the pilot's section. As had appeared on the viewscreen, there was only one man inside, lying slumped in the seat, and McCoy knelt by him to run his scanner over him. He looked up grimly.

"There's nothing I can do for him, Jim."

At the sound of his voice the man's head lifted slowly, and pain-filled eyes met those of his rescuers. "Take... take my daughter... Natalia... to Starbase 4. Please... vitally important... Take..." He drew in a last gasping breath, then his body went limp.

McCoy looked up from a swift examination. "I'm sorry, Jim. We were too late."

The Captain nodded sadly, sitting back on his heels. "His daughter? He said take Natalia to Starbase 4. Where is she?" He flicked another glance at the dead man. "Come on, Bones. We'd better search the ship."

The ship wasn't large - not much larger than one of their own shuttlecraft, so it wasn't long before they found what they sought. Kirk bent over the sleeping child.

"This, I presume, is Natalia," he whispered.

McCoy was running his scanner over the child, a girl of perhaps ten years. "It's okay, Jim. You don't have to whisper. She's unconscious... but she'll be all right," he assured quickly at the look of apprehension on the Captain's face.

Kirk let out his breath in a sigh of relief. "Thank God for that!" His eyes travelled over the small body. The child was obviously Human, very pretty, with long black hair scattered over the pillow.

McCoy leaned forward to lift the inert little body into his arms. "I'd better get her to Sickbay."

"Okay, Bones. I'll drop by later, see how she is." He beckoned Chekov. "Mr. Chekov, come and give me a hand, see if we can find anything to give us some indication as to why this ship was attacked."

A detailed search produced no results of any value, and the ship's log proved just as uninformative.

"This is ridiculous!" exclaimed Kirk. "There has to be some record of what Seymour was working on. It just doesn't make sense! Are you sure there's nothing in the log?"

The young Russian shook his head emphatically. "No, sir, nothing at all."

Kirk ran a hand through his hair. "All right, Chekov, I'm going to check on the child. I want you to go over this ship again with a fine tooth comb... maybe we've missed something."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk smiled at the young man's enthusiasm. It was a beautiful ship, after all, of a highly sophisticated design. Under different circumstances he himself wouldn't have minded examining it in minute detail again.

He made his way to Sickbay, where McCoy was just finishing off a detailed examination of their passenger.

"Hi, Jim. Any luck?"

Kirk spread his hands. "Not a thing. Chekov's going over it again, but he won't find anything. It just doesn't make sense. Seymour had to be on his way to Starbase 4, so he must have been carrying some record of his work. I suppose it is feasible that the craft was boarded by its attackers, but there's no evidence on board to suggest such a thing. I don't know, Bones... it's a complete mystery." His gaze flicked over the child. "How is she?"

The doctor followed his gaze. "Nothing much to worry about. Just a blow to the head... knocked her unconscious. It's not severe enough to have caused any damage. She'll be okay."

Kirk nodded. "Good. Let me know when she wakes. Maybe she can throw some light on the matter."

* * *

The child stirred and opened her eyes. Her head ached, and she felt sick, but these feelings were pushed to the back of her mind as she slowly took in her surroundings. Even in the subdued lighting it was clear that she was not on the 'Leander', and she fought down a sudden feeling of panic. She sat up carefully, looking round, taking in the glass-fronted cabinets round the walls, their contents hazy and indistinct in the dim light. Her frightened gaze swept over benches with strange instruments resting on their reflective surfaces, then more of the peculiar beds like the one she was sitting on, and she came to the conclusion that she was in some kind of hospital ward - though it was not like any hospital ward she could remember in her short life.

Her attention was caught by the soft glow of lights over one of the beds, and she gradually assimilated the fact that the bed was occupied. Tentatively, she swung her legs over the side and lowered herself to the floor. She took a hesitant step forward, looking about her warily, then curiosity overcame her fear and she advanced to the occupied bed. As she drew nearer, and the form became more distinct, the fear returned with stunning force, and she screamed hysterically.

Instantly the room was flooded with light, and strong arms closed around her shaking body, holding her close. She struggled vainly, kicking out at the nameless enemy, but the grip tightened and she yielded to the inevitable, sobbing helplessly. She felt herself being swung into the air, then the darkness returned.

McCoy looked down at the child in his arms, and sighed heavily. "I guess

this is my fault. I should have made sure she wasn't left alone."

"Doctor, you can't think of everything," remonstrated Christine Chapel. "She was unconscious, and we were only in the next room."

"Yeah, I know, but... I should have realised. Chris, the ship she was on was attacked - fired on! Sudderly, waking up in a strange ship, alone... Hell, she must have been terrified, poor little thing!" He carried his charge across to the bed and gently settled her, stroking her hair compassionately. He glanced across at the Vulcan, who still lay immobile. "At least she didn't disturb his healing trance."

Christine had already moved across to check the monitors, and now came to join him. "No, everything's fine. You go and get some rest. You've been on duty all day, what with Spock's accident and everything. I'll stay."

McCoy rubbed a weary hand across his brow. "I must admit, I could do with a little shut-eye. Thanks, Chris. Call me if you need me."

"Of course."

With a last look at his two patients, the doctor left, dimming the lights as he went.

* * *

Kirk walked into Sickbay, his mood considerably lightened by the sight of his First Officer sitting up in bed, eyeing the other occupant of Sickbay perplexedly. He moved across and perched on the edge of the bed.

"Good morning, Mr. Spock. Glad to see you're back with us. How do you feel?" His light, bantering words were belied by the concern in his eyes. The Vulcan was not deceived.

"I am quite recovered, Captain, although I must confess to a slight... irritation in my left hand."

"That'll teach you not to go poking your hands amongst live wires," drawled a familiar voice. They both turned to regard a grinning McCoy. "You were lucky to escape so lightly, but that hand will probably give you trouble for a few days. It's badly burned."

Spock made no comment, save for a slightly raised eyebrow, asking instead, "Who is our passenger?"

Both men followed his gaze, and Kirk sighed. "Who indeed?" He smiled slightly as Spock inclined his head. "Oh, we know her name, and roughly where she came from, but..." He proceeded to give the Vulcan a brief outline of the unorthodox arrival of their guest. "So, we're still in the dark," he finished lamely.

"And you found no records at all in the ship?"

"Not a blessed thing. Chekov and I turned the place inside out with absolutely no result."

The Vulcan chose to ignore his Captain's terminology. "I find that most strange. What exactly did...?" He was interrupted by McCoy's upraised hand as the child stirred restlessly.

"What's the matter, Bones?"

"I'm not sure, but... Well, she woke in the middle of the night having screaming hysterics. Of course," he gave the Vulcan a mischevious sidelong glance, "she could just have got a good look at our friend here. I mean, she's a young Human child, alone on a strange ship. One look at those pointed ears is enough to give any child the screaming heebie-jeebies."

How close to the mark those teasing words were, he was soon to find out. He bent over the child as her eyes flickered open, and smiled reassuringly. "It's all right, honey, no-one's gonna hurt you. How do you feel? Do you hurt anywhere?"

The girl stared up at him and shook her head silently.

"Good, good. Come on, let's get you sat up. There's some people I want you to meet." She offered no resistance as he slipped his hands under her armpits and lifted her to a sitting position. He beckoned to Kirk. "This is Captain Kirk. He's in charge of the ship."

Kirk grinned. "Hi, Natalia. That is your name, isn't it?"

Natalia regarded him expressionlessly, and he moved forward to sit on the side of the bed. His movement brought the Vulcan into the child's field of vision, and both he and McCoy were astounded by her reaction. The colour drained from her face and she shrank back against the wall, staring in horror at Spock.

Kirk leaned towards her and laid a gentle hand on her arm. She stiffened and flattened herself against the wall, looking fearfully from Kirk, to McCoy, to Spock.

Kirk smiled reassuringly. "It's all right, sweetheart. There's nothing to be afraid of. Please don't be scared." He looked across at his First Officer, who sat watching the scene with ill-concealed puzzlement. "That's Mr. Spock in the next bed. He's not as frightening as he looks, believe me." He winked at Spock's raised eyebrow. "Just between you and me," he went on in a conspiratorial whisper, "I always think he looks like those old pictures of the devil... except he hasn't got a forked tail."

He watched worriedly as the child continued to stare at Spock, his words seemingly unheard. He looked helplessly at the doctor. "Bones?"

McCoy gazed at the stiff little body thoughtfully. "I don't know, Jim," he murmured quietly. "Seems I was right, after all. It is Spock she's afraid of. She was starting to respond to me when I first spoke to her. It was only when you moved and she caught sight of him... Jim, you can see the child's terrified!"

"Yes, I know. But... why?"

"Maybe she's never seen a Vulcan before."

"Quite possible, but surely that's not sufficient reason for this... terror. Bones, you talk to her. You said yourself, she was beginning to respond to you."

"I'll try, but..." He sat down in front of the child and held out a hand. "Hey, it's me, remember? I'm not gonna hurt you." She tore her gaze from the Vulcan and stared unblinkingly at the doctor. "What's the matter, honey? Is it Spock? Honestly, honey, you don't need to be afraid of him. He may look like Captain Kirk's 'devil', but really, he won't hurt you. He's a Vulcan. Haven't you ever seen a Vulcan before?"

She stared at him, wide-eyed, and McCoy reached out to take her hand, only to have it snatched away from him as Natalia backed further against the wall. Sighing defeatedly, he turned to Kirk.

"It's no use, Jim, I'm not getting through to her."

With a last reassuring smile they rose and moved across to join Spock. "I just don't get it, Jim. She's really scared!"

Kirk rubbed his chin, looking thoughtfully from Spock to Natalia. "We've got to find out what happened on that ship... what her father was working on. Obviously, she's not going to tell us anything at the moment, even if she knows. Bones, maybe you'd better release Spock to his quarters. She may settle down better if he's not in Sickbay."

To the surprise of both himself and the doctor, Spock vetoed the suggestion. "I don't think that would be a good idea, sir. I am not fully recovered, and feel the need to remain under Dr. McCoy's supervision."

McCoy's jaw dropped open in astonishment. "What!" His eyes went automatically to the monitors over the bed. The readings were perfectly normal. "But... Spock, surely you'd prefer your own quarters. I mean..."

Spock looked meaningfully from Kirk to McCoy, speaking slowly and distinctly. "Doctor, I feel it would be advantageous for me to remain in Sickbay for the time being."

The other two exchanged glances, and McCoy shrugged. "Okay, if you really feel the need." Then, more quietly, "But I hope you know what you're doing."

The Vulcan offered no comment, merely settling back against the pillow.

Kirk summoned up a grin. "Well, if you're sure, I'll leave you to it. I'd better get back to the Bridge." He winked at McCoy. "Have fun... and good luck."

The doctor looked from the recumbent Vulcan across to where Natalia had slid down under the blanket, her gaze still fixed unwaveringly on Spock. He sighed. "Thanks, Jim. I think I'm gonna need it."

* * *

Spock sat up in bed concentrating on the small computer screen in front of him, studiously ignoring the steady gaze of his companion in Sickbay. Natalia had calmed down to some degree, but still refused to have anything to do with anyone, sitting huddled under the blanket. An untouched meal tray lay on the table at the side of the bed.

McCoy stood just inside the doorway and gave a mental sigh. It had been over eight hours now, during which time they had made little, if any, headway. All attempts to befriend the child had met with the same response - a hostile stare. The doctor lingered for a while, deep in thought. Something must work... trigger some sort of reaction. Maybe...

He left the room to return some minutes later holding a small, kitten-like animal. He wandered nonchalantly over to the Vulcan's bed, absently stroking the creature. "Mr. Spock, you should be resting." Then, quietly, "Think he'll be able to get through to her?"

Spock eyed the creature interestedly. "It might work, yes. How do you plan to introduce him?"

McCoy grinned, and still in the same low voice answered, "Oh, I've got that all worked out. Just wait a minute, you'll see."

The Vulcan raised an eyebrow. "Indeed, Doctor. I shall be interested to observe this feat."

Almost on cue, the intercom buzzed loudly. McCoy winked at Spock and crossed to the instrument. "Sickbay, McCoy here."

"Bones," came Kirk's urgent voice, "I need you on the Bridge - now!"

"Okay, Jim, I'm on my way." He hurried to the door, then stopped, seemingly only just aware that he still held the animal. With a muffled exclamation he looked about him, the kitten held mewling in his hand. He swiftly crossed the room to Natalia's bed and dumped it beside her. "Look after him for me, will you?" Then he was gone.

Left alone, the Vulcan ostensibly immersed himself in his computations, Natalia watched the animal's stumbling attempts to walk. Slowly it made its way up the bed, instinctively following the scent of the Human. Its little eyes peered about in bewilderment, and a plaintive mew issued from its throat. Natalia cast a quick glance towards the bent head of the Vulcan, then reached out a tentative hand. A rough little tongue tickled her finger, and for the first time since she had been brought aboard, she smiled.

From the sanctuary of McCoy's office, Kirk and the doctor watched as she lifted the little animal and held it against her face. McCoy grinned.

"Round one to me."

Kirk nodded silently, his eyes resting on the child, and McCoy laid a hand on his shoulder. "Give it time, Jim," he began quietly. "She's badly shocked, but I think she'll make it."

"Will she, Bones? Has she said anything yet?"

"Not a word," McCoy admitted.

"I don't like it, it's... unnatural. What was her father working on? Who attacked the ship? Why hasn't she even mentioned her father? She's only a kid. You'd think she'd be frantic being separated from him with no explanation... And then there's Spock. Why the hell is she so afraid of him?"

"That's a lot of questions, Jim."

"Too many questions. The whole thing's a mystery, Bones and I don't like mysteries."

Several minutes later McCoy re-entered Sickbay and approached the girl. He inclined his head and regarded her quizzically. "He hasn't given you any trouble, has he?"

Almost without thinking, the child replied, "He's too little."

Not a trace of his inner elation was apparent in the doctor's voice as he drawled, "Oh, I dunno. He may be little, but he's sure got sharp teeth."

Natalia looked at the little animal uncertainly before holding it out to the doctor. Mentally chiding himself, he took it from her, and glanced at the tray of food. "Aren't you hungry?"

He hesitated a second, eyeing the plate, then shook her head.

Uh-ch, thought McCoy, we're back to sign language again, are we? Aloud, he said, "Would you like something else... a chicken sandwich... icecream?"

With the merest hint of a smile she nodded. The doctor beamed at her and picked up the tray with his free hand.

"Well, why didn't you say you didn't like this before? Don't go away - I'll be right back."

As he passed the Vulcan's bed, he flashed him a grin of triumph. Progress at last, however small.

* * *

"That's funny."

Kirk turned to a puzzled Chekov. "What is?"

Chekov started and smiled apologetically. "Sorry, sir. I was thinking aloud." He glanced again at the screen he had been studying. "It's just... I could have sworn I saw something, but... it's gone now."

Kirk rose to his feet and went to stand by his side. "What was it?"

"I'm not sure, Captain. It was only for a fraction of a second... just a blip. There's nothing showing now."

"Hmm... could be nothing, but, on the other hand... Keep on it, Mr. Chekov. If anything shows up again, let me know immediately."

"Yes, sir."

Minutes later, he looked up again. "Captain, it just appeared again, the same as before. Just a single blip, then nothing."

"Mr. Sulu, anything on your board?"

"Fractionally, sir. Something just came in and out of sensor range."

Kirk was definitely uneasy. "Both of you keep a close watch, just in case."

When it happened a third, then a fourth time, there was no further doubt.

"Whatever it is is changing speed... or direction," mused Kirk.

"It would seem that way, sir. At a guess, I'd say someone is tracking us... and being very careful about it."

Another mystery. Coincidence? "Very well, gentlemen, keep a close watch. If whoever it is gets any closer, I want to know at once."

* * *

The lights were dimmed again in a semblance of night on the Enterprise. All was quiet in Sickbay, save for the soft click and hum of Spock's small computer. Although no sound or movement came from the other bed, Spock knew that Natalia was not sleeping. He could almost feel her intense gaze, and sighed inwardly. They didn't seem to be getting very far with her. After that one short reply to McCoy she had not uttered a single word, although she had eaten the food he had brought to her... and she had allowed Christine to settle her down for the night.

With an audible sigh he switched off the computer and slid it aside, then lay back in contemplation. After several moments of absolute silence he asked quietly, "Are you asleep?" He didn't really expect an answer, continuing almost at once in the same gentle tone, "It's strange, but every time I'm in Sickbay I find it almost impossible to sleep. Maybe it's the enforced inactivity... At such times I find myself thinking of my home planet, Vulcan. Do you know anything about Vulcan?"

Silence.

He went on, almost to himself, "To Humans, it appears a harsh and forbidding planet, but it can be beautiful." He proceeded to talk, in a soothing, almost hypnotic voice, painting a vivid picture of his home, his family, his life as a child. He stole a glance at the child from time to time, discovering to his satisfaction that she was listening, spellbound. Gradually the tension between them became less tangible as he related hitherto unspoken-of incidents in his childhood. "You would like I'Chaya, I think. He looks fierce, but he's as gentle as the kitten you were playing with today." He looked across at her. "Did you have a pet at home?"

The direct question caught her unawares, and she gasped involuntarily at the word 'home'. Tears started to her eyes, and one word stumbled from trembling lips. "Daddy!" Then she was sobbing uncontrollably.

Spock sat up and watched her for a few seconds. Now that he had achieved his objective he was by no means certain what to do. He got out of bed and walked across the room.

Just inside the door, unseen in the dim light, Christine Chapel stood, watching, waiting, ready to intervene should the need arise. She held her breath as Spock reached out a hesitant hand to touch the child's hair, tensing for the resultant scream...which never materialised. Either Natalia had forgotten who was with her, or she no longer thought it mattered, and she flung herself into Spock's arms. He held her, a little awkwardly at first, then instinct took over and he gathered her close, rocking her gently. Christine swallowed the lump in her throat as she watched the coldly aloof Vulcan cradling the sobbing child tenderly in his arms; then blinking away sudden tears she turned and slipped silently from the room.

At long last Natalia's sobs died away. Spock lowered her to the pillow and looked down at her. She was sound asleep, her deep, even breathing punctuated at intervals by a dry rasping sob. He smoothed back a lock of hair which had fallen over her face, and pulled the cover up to her chin, then returned to his own bed. Could this be the breakthrough they'd been waiting for?

He woke several hours later to find Natalia lying studying him. He sat up.

"Good morning."

"How do you know?"

A raised eyebrow. "How do I know what?"

"That it's morning."

He was momentarily at a loss how to explain the finer points of ship's time

to a small Human child. "Well... it isn't really morning at all, of course, but..."

McCoy was pleasantly surprised on entering the room to find Spock giving a detailed but easy to understand explanation of the necessity of adhering to a 24-hour day on board ship to an enthralled Natalia. He approached, adding his own 'Good morning', examining the child closely. She seemed totally relaxed this morning, returning his smile shyly. Obviously Spock's treatment, as described to him by Christine earlier on, had had the desired effect. He sat down to run his scanner over her, taking easily as he did so. "How do you feel now? No aches or pains anywhere... feel sick... anything?"

She shook her head. "No, sir. Can I get up now?"

"Of course you can. You've been lazing around here long enough. There's nothing wrong with you." She glanced up at him uncertainly, realising he was only joking as he grinned at her.

"Where's... you never told me his name... that little animal?"

"Oh, you mean Samson?"

"Samson?" she echoed. "That's a funny name. Can I see him, please?"

"Sure you can, as soon as you..." A movement from the other bed caught his eye. "Excuse me, honey." He turned his head. "Mr. Spock, where do you think you're going?"

"I am returning to duty, Doctor."

"Oh, are you? On whose authority?"

"Doctor, I am quite recovered, as you well know."

"I don't know anything of the sort, Mr. Spock," retorted the doctor. "You said yourself, you felt it would be advantageous to remain in Sickbay."

Spock restrained his exasperation with a visible effort. "That was yesterday, Doctor McCoy. I fail to see why you feel the need..."

McCoy grinned, relenting. "Okay, Spock. Go and get dressed. But I do want to have a look at that hand before you leave."

"Thank you," replied the Vulcan icily, drawing himself up and leaving the room with wounded dignity.

As he departed McCoy turned back to Natalia, to regard her thoughtfully. "Natalia," he began, treading warily, "why were you so afraid of Spock before?"

Natalia coloured and looked down, biting her lip. McCoy reached out and with a gentle finger lifted her chin. "You're not still afraid of him, are you?"

She shook her head. "No... but... well, it was people like him who attacked the 'Leander'."

"People like him?" He took hold of her arms. "Are you sure? Did you see them?"

"Yes... on the viewscreen, before... before..." She faltered as the painful memories returned. "Doctor... my... my father... He is dead... isn't he?"

The doctor lifted a hand to stroke her hair gently. "I'm afraid so, sweetheart. We arrived too late... I'm sorry." He sat silently for a while, as the child tried hard not to cry, then went on gently, "Natalia, I know this is painful for you, but it's very important. You said you saw people like Spock... Do you mean they looked like him... pointed ears, slanting eyebrows?"

The child swallowed. "Yes. That's why... I thought I was on their ship when I woke up and saw him."

A light was beginning to dawn, and McCoy did not like the implications at all. "Honey, listen to me. Think very carefully. Did you see the ship?" She nodded. "Good. Now, can you describe it? Take your time."

She screwed up her eyes in concentration. "Well, it was sort of... round, with wings sticking out. And there was a big picture underneath. I couldn't see it very well, but it looked a bit like a bird... a great big bird."

A chill ran down McCoy's spine as his worst fears were confirmed. It had to be!

Natalia watched him worriedly as he fell silent. "Doctor, who were they? Were they Vulcans like Mr. Spock?"

He smiled reassuringly. "No, they're certainly not Vulcans. From what you've told me, they're... well... they look like Vulcans, but they come from a different planet and are the exact opposite of Vulcans. They're very unfriendly." He patted her arm. "Well, that's enough questions for now. I have to go see the Captain, so I'll send Nurse Chapel in to help you get dressed, and she can take you to see Samson."

She returned the smile. "Okay."

* * *

"Romulans! Oh boy, that's all we need. Are you sure, Bones?"

"Yes, Jim. The description of both them and the ship was unmistakable. The 'Leander' was attacked by Romulans."

"Great! And now we're being tracked by an unknown craft or crafts. We're not so very far from the Romulan Neutral Zone, so there's a strong possibility that those unknown craft are Romulan. What the hell do they want? Did she say anything about the reason for the attack?"

"I didn't ask. I thought I'd better take it easy. She's only just started talking, and though she's doing a good job of hiding her feelings, she's very upset about her father, naturally."

Kirk nodded in understanding. "Yes, of course. But we're going to have to find out... soon."

"Captain."

They both tuned to the Vulcar. "Yes, Spock?"

"Something just came into sensor range... approaching fast. A moment, sir... the signal is breaking up... dividing... two, three... four separate readings." He looked up. "Whoever or whatever they are, they are travelling at warp 7, Captain. Visual range in 1.24 minutes."

"Keep on it, Mr. Spock!" snapped out Kirk, his eyes drawn instinctively to the viewscreen. "As soon as they're in range, give it everything we've got! Extreme magnification. I want to know exactly what we're up against."

The doctor stepped closer to the command chair, speaking in a low voice. "What if it is Romulans, Jim? There are four of them, and only one of us. That's not very good odds."

Kirk forced a tight smile. "Maybe they just want to talk."

"Yeah," McCoy agreed drily. "And maybe the Klingons are really very nice people underneath."

Kirk's smile widened in spite of himself. "Don't be so defeatist, Doctor. We've been in worse situations... and we're all still here."

The doctor was obviously unconvinced, but refrained from comment, his gaze following Kirk's to the viewscreen. As they watched four spots of light slowly detached themselves from the surrounding starfield, gradually gaining both in size and brilliance as they ate up the distance between them and the Enterprise.

"Magnification, Mr. Sulu."

"Aye, sir."

The globes of light appeared to jump forward as Sulu made the adjustment. All eyes were drawn to the screen rivetted on the four spacecraft displayed there.

Kirk let out his breath slowly. "So now we know."

There was indeed no possible doubt as to the identity of their visitors. That distinctive shape, and the unmistakable bird of prey depicted on the undersides of the ships fairly shouted at the word 'Romulan'!

Kirk swung to face Uhura. "Lieutenant, see if you can contact them."

"Yes, sir."

Fingers drumming absently on the chair arm, Kirk watched the Romulan ships, mind racing. Bones was right, despite his own attempts to play down the situation. Four Romulan battle cruisers was definitely a force to be reckoned with.

"Captain, I have the Romulan Commander."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. On the screen, please." He straightened to regard the image of the alien. Even now, though he knew what to expect, it was still somewhat disconcerting to confront a hostile alien who so closely resembled his trusted First Officer. He smiled disarmingly. "I am Captain James T. Kirk, in command of the USS Enterprise. To what do we owe this unexpected visit?"

The Romulan stared directly at the screen, not a flicker of emotion disturbing his hawklike countenance. "You recently recovered a private vessel. I would appreciate it if you would relinquish the same to us."

Kirk returned the emotionless stare measure for measure. "And if I don't?"

"You really do not have a great deal of choice, Captain. I repeat, relinquish the spacecraft and its occupants to us."

Stalling for time, Kirk ventured, "I will have to confer with my senior officers... and the occupants of the other ship."

The Romulan looked through him. "I fail to see why, but we are not unreasonable. You have one hour." The image vanished abruptly.

"Damn!" Kirk thumped the arm of his chair violently, and rounded on McCoy. "Bones, we've got to know what the hell Seymour was working on that's so important to the Romulans! I'm going to have to talk to Natalia. She must know something, maybe some secret hiding place we haven't been able to detect." He sighed at the doctor's worried frown. "Bones, we have to - you know we do. There's no choice."

McCoy shrugged resignedly. "Yeah, Jim, I know. But for God's sake, please be careful."

Kirk stood up. "Of course. Spock, you'd better come with us. You've had more contact with Natalia than either of us. Sulu, you have the con. Keep a close watch on those ships... any sign of any activity whatsoever, I want to know."

"Understood, sir."

* * *

The three entered the biology lab, where Christine and Natalia were absorbed with several small furry animals in a cage. Natalia looked up and smiled a welcome. As she took in their serious expressions the smile faded and she edged closer to the nurse. Taking it upon himself to be the spokesman, McCoy stepped forward to kneel before the child.

"Natalia, we need your help."

She tensed and her eyes slid from the doctor's face to the other two men standing nearby. McCoy took her hands gently.

"Don't be afraid, honey. We only want to ask you some questions. All right?" She nodded mutely. "Good. ... need to know what your father was working on." He gripped her hands as she began to back away. "He!... hey... I thought we were friends now. You're not still scared of us, are you?"

"Nooo..." she answered, a little uncertainly.

"Well, I'm sure glad to hear that. Now, this is very important. Do you know if your father had any special papers he was working on? Did he have a special place where he kept them in the 'Leander'?"

"He... he didn't bring any papers or anything onto the 'Leander'.

"Are you sure? Maybe he had a case, or some tapes?"

She shook her head. "No, he said it was too dangerous."

McCoy sat back on his heels and looked up at Kirk. "Well, I guess that's it, gentlemen. We're no further on." He got to his feet, and the three moved away a little to confer quietly.

"It just doesn't make sense. Seymour said he'd been working on a formula of some sort on Beta Cyran. What? Obviously it's something the Romulans want pretty badly. It's inconceivable that there's no record anywhere."

Spock inclined his head thoughtfully. "Gentlemen, I feel it would be wise to recap on the situation at this time. Captain, you said that both yourself and Mr. Chekov checked the ship thoroughly, and found nothing?"

"Not a thing."

"That does not seem possible, in view of the circumstances."

"Nevertheless, it's true," insisted Kirk defensively. "You can go and check yourself if you feel we may have missed something."

Spock held up a hand. "That will not be necessary. If you found nothing, then I am quite satisfied that there was nothing to be found. However, I am still of the opinion that he must have had some form of retrievable information."

Somewhat mollified, Kirk sighed tiredly. "Well, if he did, it's so carefully hidden it'll stay there forever! The only things we found on the ship of any significance were Seymour and Lia."

Spock clasped his hands behind his back, the glimmer of an idea beginning to take root. "Captain," he looked up, "Seymour was still alive when you found him. Did he say anything before he died?"

"Not a lot; not of any significance. He was deeply concerned for his daughter's safety."

The Vulcan nodded. "Can you remember exactly what he said?" He looked from Kirk to McCoy.

McCoy shrugged. "Just to... take Natalia to Starbase 4."

Kirk nodded agreement, then added slowly, "But he said something else. Bones." He frowned in concentration. "He said... take Natalia to Starbase 4... then, something about it being important... yes, that's what he said... vitally important."

"Vitally important," repeated Spock. "Does that not strike you as odd?"

"Odd? In what way? Naturally he's be concerned about his daughter - any father would be."

"Of course, Doctor, that was not my point. It was his particular phraseology that seemed incongruous. Aside from his quite natural anxiety on behalf of his child, why should it be 'vitally' important to get Natalia to Starbase 4?"

"Yes," agreed Kirk slowly, "Yes, I think I see what you mean."

All three turned to look at Natalia, who backed away in sudden fear. Spock glanced at the other two men before advancing towards the child. He spoke quietly.

"Natalia, I want you to listen to me very carefully. We know your father was working on something on Beta Cyran... something very important. He started to tell Captain Kirk what it was, but the communications cut out before he had time to say very much. Do you know if he kept any records of his work? Did he

tell you anything?"

She gulped and looked wildly about her. "No... no, he didn't tell me anything... he didn't... he didn't! She started to cry hysterically, and McCoy rushed to her, slipping an arm around her comfortingly.

"Spock, this isn't doing any good! She doesn't know anything! For heaven's sake, she's just a child!"

"Doctor, I'm afraid I must disagree. I do not like this any more than you do, but at the moment she's our only hope."

"Well you can't question her right now! The child's hysterical! I won't allow it!"

Spock sighed exasperatedly. "Very well, Doctor, we will give her time to regain control of herself. But need I remind you, time is something we do not have a great deal of."

"I am well aware of that, Mr. Spock," McCoy retorted stiffly. He led the sobbing child away, and Spock met Kirk's eyes.

"Do you really think she knows something, Spock?"

"It would seem to be the only possible explanation, sir. She must be questioned."

"Ye...es, I suppose so. It's just that... well... she looked so... scared, and... so alone."

"Yes, I know," the Vulcan answered softly.

Kirk looked at his friend compassionately. "We do seem to get landed with some strange situations. Nothing's ever easy, is it?"

"No, sir," was the quiet reply.

Kirk laid a hand briefly on his friend's arm, and smiled. "Come on. Let's go see what our friends out there are up to."

They returned to the Bridge in silence, taking up their respective positions to gain an update on proceedings. A quick glance at the viewscreen was enough to confirm that nothing had changed. The four Romulans still hung there ominously, blotting out the starfield.

Precisely one hour from the last transmission, the Romulans re-established contact. Kirk gazed impassively at the alien, waiting.

"Captain Kirk, I trust you have considered your position?" the Romulan inquired silkily.

"I have."

"Then I take it you are ready to agree terms."

Kirk looked straight at him. His reply was short and simple. "No."

The urbane mask slipped a little. "No?"

"No, I will not hand over the ship, or its occupants."

"Captain, I think you would be well advised to reconsider. Is one small ship really worth the risk to your own ship and your crew? You are outnumbered, and if you are so foolhardy as to engage us in combat, there can only be one ultimate outcome. Your ship has insufficient firepower to hold off four of our ships indefinitely."

"Nevertheless, my decision stands. I will not surrender anything to you."

Anger flashed across the Romulan's face. "Very well. Be prepared to accept the consequences."

Transmission ceased abruptly and Kirk leaned forward. "Lieutenant Uhura, sound red alert. Mr. Sulu, activate deflector shields, we're going to have a

rough ride." He swung to his First Officer. "Status report, Mr. Spock. Can we withstand an outright attack from them?"

The Vulcan went to stand by his side. "I cannot say with any degree of certainty, but the odds are not in our favour, sir."

Kirk slammed a fist onto the arm of the chair. "Of course, we can't stand up to four Romulan battlecruisers," he agreed savagely, "but I'm damned if I'll give in without a fight! If only we knew what it was they were after... why it's so important." He came to a sudden decision, and flipped the intercom. "Bridge to Sickbay."

"Sickbay, sir. Nurse Chapel here."

"Nurse, is Dr. McCoy there?"

"Not right at this minute, sir, but I can get him."

"Do that, please. I want him on the Bridge immediately, and tell him to bring Natalia with him."

"Jim," another voice broke in, "you can't be serious! After the state she was in? I've only just managed to calm her down!"

"Sorry, Bones, we've no other choice. Those Rom..." At that moment the Bridge shuddered under a barrage of phaser fire, and Kirk yelled into the intercom, "Doctor, get her up here, now! That's an order!" He cut communication, snapping out, "Damage report!"

Sulu studied his readouts. "Shields are holding, sir."

"No serious damage to the ship or crew, Captain," offered Uhura.

Kirk glared at the screen where the alien ships hung, motionless and silent again. "Obviously, they mean business," he snarled. "They're going to play cat and mouse... wear us down slowly until we surrender."

The turbolift doors swished open, and an angry McCoy swept out with a very reluctant Natalia in tow.

"Captain," he stated furiously, "I fail to see what you hope to gain by this. She's already told you she doesn't know anything! There just aren't any records to be found!"

Kirk sighed tiredly. "I'm sorry, Bones, I can't accept that... and, more importantly," he gestured to the screen, "neither can they."

A horrified gasp escaped the child's lips as her eyes followed Kirk's pointing finger. He reached out and drew her towards him.

"Natalia, now do you realise the importance of finding those records? You do recognise those ships?" She nodded wordlessly, and he followed home this small advantage. "Did your father tell you anything about his work?"

Her eyes slid back to the viewscreen. "He... he made me promise... not to say anything to anybody... not till I reached Starbase 4."

"Then you do know what he was working on? How? Are there records which we haven't been able to find?"

She looked uncomfortable. "No... nothing that can be seen."

"Can't be seen? But... how...?"

"Father made me promise... he said it was im... imperative that I tell no-one anything until I got to Starbase 4."

Spock, who had been considering the child thoughtfully, now approached.

"That would seem to confirm a theory I have been working on. The child has the information. It's the only logical explanation." He held Natalia's eyes gravely. "Natalia, unless we know exactly what we are dealing with here, none of us will ever reach Starbase 4. Do you understand?"

She dropped her gaze, staring at her feet, her reply hardly audible. "Yes, sir, I understand."

Kirk glanced from Spock to Natalia. "You say she has the information? But... she's only a child!"

Spock nodded, and moved to kneel in front of the child. "If my theory is correct... You have a photographic memory... instant recall? Am I right?"

She returned his searching gaze bravely, suddenly looking much older than her ten years. "Yes."

"Photographic memory?" echoed Kirk. "Of course! No visible records! Why didn't I think of that! Well, that certainly rules out surrender in any case - I won't, under any circumstances, hand over a Human child to the Romulans. The point is, what do we do now? How does knowing where the information is help us to get out of this mess?"

"I would say, Captain, that that depends on what, exactly, the project was that Professor Seymour was undertaking."

They both looked at Natalia, and Kirk took a deep breath. It suddenly came home to him that this was a small female child they were dealing with. How to explain? "Natalia, do you have any idea what kind of thing your father was working on, or did he only give you calculations... numbers?"

She hesitated, and Spock put in quietly, "Would it be of any help to us in our present situation... a weapon of some sort?"

She shook her head. "No, not a weapon. Father said it would make ships go faster... much faster."

The two senior officers exchanged glances, and Kirk whistled softly. "Now we know why the Romulans are so anxious to obtain the formula. Spock, do you suppose we could utilise it now? Is it possible?"

"Until I know the formula it is impossible to tell. Natalia, I realise that you made a promise to your father, but in the present circumstances that formula could well save all our lives. We cannot fight four ships, so our only hope is to escape... get away. Do you trust us... do you trust me?"

Natalia's eyes moved round the Bridge slowly, from person to person, flicking over the viewscreen with its ominous picture, coming to rest finally on the Vulcan's face. She bit her lip, then nodded silently. The Bridge crew let out the breaths they had all been unconsciously holding, the Sulu looked up sharply.

"Captain, we're under attack again! Photon torpedoes!"

"Stations, everyone! Red alert! Arm photon torpedoes, Mr. Chekov!" Kirk snatched up Natalia as the ship rocked under the fresh assault.

"Damage reports, decks 5 and 6, Captain. Nothing serious. The shields are holding at the moment." The Vulcan's voice was tense.

Kirk received the report grimly as his eyes swept the Bridge, assuring himself that no-one was hurt. "Mr. Chekov, fire photon torpedoes!" he snapped out, and watched the screen as the missiles found their target, exploding in brilliant flares.

"Two direct hits, Captain, but their shields are undamaged."

Kirk swore softly under his breath. They were stuck in a no-win situation, and the thought added fire to his already smouldering temper. Savagely, he clamped down on his fury. They wouldn't get the better of him, not while he still had breath in his body! Gradually he became aware that the small body in his arms was trembling violently, and he held her close, rocking her gently. He glanced across at his First Officer, a mute enquiry in his eyes.

Spock moved to his side. "Sir, we do not have much time. They may get tired of 'playing' with us, and attack in earnest. Our shields will not withstand a concerted attack from four vessels for any length of time."

Kirk nodded understanding, holding Natalia at arms length. He ran a gentle finger down her cheek. "Sweetheart, we need that information. It's our only chance."

She sighed heavily. "Yes, I understand."

Kirk echoes the sigh thankfully. "Thank you." He looked up. "Spock?"

The Vulcan nodded. "It would be easier and quicker if I were to effect a direct transfer of information." He regarded the child. "If you will permit, I will lift the formula directly from your mind. Do you know what telepathy is?"

Natalia nodded slowly, warily, her eyes fixed unwaveringly on his face. He reached out and touched her face softly.

"Do not be afraid, this will only take a moment, and you will feel nothing." He hesitated momentarily, meeting her steady gaze. Invading another being's mind was always distressing to him.

As if sensing his reluctance, Natalia lifted a hand, and her fingers curled reassuringly around his. "It's all right... I'm not afraid of you. What do you want me to do?"

Spock permitted the tiniest of smiles to curve his lips. "Just think of the formula and relax... Try to clear your mind of anything else. Close your eyes if it will help."

Obediently she closed her eyes, and Spock spread his fingers on her face, his own eyes closing in concentration. The onlookers waited with baited breath, eyes drawn involuntarily to the viewscreen with its ominous image. The seconds dragged slowly by, the only sounds on the Bridge the steady whirr and click of relays.

After what seemed an eternity Spock drew back and opened unfocussed eyes. He shook his head slightly, and the glazed look vanished as he looked up at Kirk, his mind already working on the involved process.

"I think it will work, given enough time," he stated with satisfaction. "A most interesting breakthrough. I will require Mr. Scott's assistance, Captain."

Kirk beckoned the Scot forward. "Get onto it right away. Let's hope our friends outside don't decide to come in for the kill just yet."

* * *

Minutes dragged slowly into an hour... two... broken at intervals by a sporadic burst of phaser fire from the alien vessels. The Enterprise's shields had been weakened considerably, but miraculously still held; but the strain was beginning to tell on the crew. Kirk's earlier analogy was very close to the mark - the Romulans were playing a cat and mouse game. They were obviously in no hurry, quite confident of the inevitable outcome; hence the intermittent barrages, interspersed with long intervals during which the ships hovered like the birds of prey depicted on their undersides. For the hundredth time Kirk glanced across to where Spock and Scotty were immersed in seemingly endless computations, in constant communication with Scotty's second-in-command down in Engineering. At length the Scot gave in to the compulsive urge to return to his own domain and personally take charge of proceedings down there, leaving Spock to complete the necessary 'paperwork'.

A particularly heavy jolt shook the Bridge, making everyone cling to the nearest available support. Kirk flashed a glance at his First Officer as he clung grimly to the arm of his chair. "How much longer, Spock? I think our friends are tiring of their little game."

Spock punched in a few more digits before looking up. "I cannot be positive, of course, Captain, as the process is only experimental and as yet untried, but if Professor Seymour's calculations are correct, an attempt can be made now."

"Thank you, Mr. Spock." Kirk glanced around the Bridge, then shrugged. "Well, what have we got to lose? Go ahead." He flipped the intercom. "Attention all hands! This is the Captain. Prepare for sharp acceleration. We are going to make an attempt to outrun the Romulans. Brace yourselves... Kirk out."

He nodded to the Vulcan, and almost immediately the Bridge reverberated to a shrill whine as the power built up to tremendous intensity. He spared a glance at the viewscreen, where the Romulans were re-grouping, their sensors obviously registering the rapid build-up of power on the Enterprise.

"They're firing, Captain!" Sulu's voice was tense. "Photon torpedoes... impact in five seconds, sir!"

"Now, Spock!"

All eyes were rivetted on the viewscreen, where the enemy ships seemed to hang for a fleeting instant before the fabric of space coalesced, and they were rammed down into their seats by the incredible forces being exerted upon the ship. Into the maelstrom that surrounded them came the Vulcan's calm, even voice.

"Warp nine... ten... eleven. Holding at eleven... but I would not recommend prolonged application at this stage, Captain."

Kirk let out his breath in relief. "Thank you, Mr. Spock. Mr. Sulu, reduce speed to warp three... by slow stages. We don't want to be flung into the bulkheads." He beamed exultantly at his Bridge crew. "Gentlemen... we did it! Congratulations, Spock. Oh boy, what I would have given to have seen that Romulan Commander's face. He must have got one helluva shock when we just disappeared like that."

"Indeed, sir. Professor Seymour has made a remarkable breakthrough which may well revolutionise the present capabilities of the Federation."

Kirk sobered abruptly. "Yes. It's a pity he didn't live to see his theory proved. But we can ensure that he gets recognition for his outstanding contribution to Federation science." He turned to the Helmsman. "Mr. Sulu, plot a course for Starbase 4 and implement immediately. At least we can carry out his last wish by delivering his daughter to safety."

* * *

"Standard orbit achieved, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu." Kirk rose. "Come on, Spock. We've got a delivery to make."

They entered Sickbay to find a tearful Natalia clinging fiercely to McCoy. He grinned ruefully. "She doesn't want to go."

"Doesn't want to go? But... why not? We've contacted your aunt and uncle, Natalia. They're very concerned about you, and most anxious for you to go to them. Why don't you want to go?"

"I want to stay here," she wailed plaintively. "Please, why can't I stay? I won't be any trouble... honestly."

Kirk ran a hand through his hair helplessly. "Natalia, that's impossible! You can't stay here!"

"Why?"

"Why...? Well, because... because..." He looked at the Vulcan. "Spock, you tell her. You can explain things better."

"Thank you, sir," Spock observed drily, regarding the child sympathetically. Resolutely, he began, "The Captain is right. A Starship is no place for a child. You have had ample proof of that in the time you have been aboard. That incident with the Romulans... it wasn't just an isolated incident, believe me. We are often engaged in battle... It is too dangerous, don't you see?"

"But I don't mind - really I don't."

"You will, take my word for it. You were frightened, weren't you?"

Natalia nodded reluctantly. "Ye...es... but... but I don't even know my aunt and uncle. They may not like me." The tears overflowed and a sob caught in her throat.

Spock knelt and laid his hands on her shoulders. "Natalia, you are facing obstacles that do not exist. Why shouldn't your aunt and uncle like you? You didn't know any of us a few days ago, yet you now state that you want to stay with us. Why should you not also wish to stay with your relatives, once you have met them? You are being unreasonable. You know that, don't you?" he insisted gently.

She raised her eyes to his, then nodded dumbly. She took a deep breath. "But I still don't want to go," she uttered in a small voice.

Despite himself, Spock felt a surge of compassion for the lonely little orphan. "Would you like me to come with you?" Tactfully, he didn't mention the fact that he would have had to go anyway, along with Captain Kirk, to file a complete report on the incident with the Romulans and the utilisation of Professor Seymour's formula.

Natalia's eyes lit up hopefully. "Would you?"

Kirk picked up his cue. "We'll all go with you, if you like. How about it, Bones? What say we all go down together? You'll create quite a sensation, Natalia, arriving with the Captain, First Officer and Chief Medical Officer of a Federation Starship. Your aunt and uncle will be very impressed."

She brightened considerably. "They will, won't they?"

"Sure they will," added McCoy with a grin. "You'll be quite a celebrity."

* * *

Materialising at the starbase terminal indeed created something of a sensation, as news of their recent encounter had preceeded them via subspace radio communication. There was quite a crowd waiting to welcome them, from the Director of the Starbase down to the inevitable journalists who always seemed to have their sources for everything. They were skilfully whisked away from the unwanted publicity, and shown into a large room where a middle-aged couple rose to their feet apprehensively. By their expressions they were obviously as wary of meeting Natalia as she was of them. She clung tightly to Spock's hand as Kirk proceeded to break the ice a little by exchanging introductions. He drew Natalia forward, firmly loosening her grasp on the Vulcan's hand, the thought flashing through his mind - 'you have to be cruel to be kind' - a strange saying, but unfortunately, in this instance, true.

"Natalia, this is your Aunt Catherine and your Uncle David."

Catherine Seymour bent down to the child and smiled. "Are you as scared as I am?"

Natalia stared at her aunt. "You're scared? Of me?"

"No, sweetheart, not of you. Just... the idea of having a child to look after. You see, your uncle and I... well, we never could have a child... but we've always wanted a daughter. Do you think, maybe, you could be happy with us?"

Natalia looked from one to the other. "I... I..." She broke off and cast an imploring look at Spock, who nodded. She swallowed nervously and managed a tremulous smile. "I'll try."

"That's all we ask of you, my dear. Somehow, I think we'll all get along very well. We have a big house, so you'll have your own room, and we've got a nice garden with a swimming pool." She inclined her head. "Would you like a pet?"

"A pet? What sort of pet?"

Her aunt smiled. "Oh, I think your friend Dr. McCoy has some ideas on that score - don't you, Doctor?"

McCoy grinned. "Sure do, Ma'am." He handed the basket he'd been carrying to Natalia. "Take care of him."

Natalia took the basket curiously and lifted the lid. Her eyes widened and she smiled delightedly. "Samson! Oh, Dr. McCoy, are you sure? Can I really keep him?"

The doctor stood, arms folded in mock seriousness. "Only if you promise to take good care of him."

"Oh, I will, I will! I promise!" She handed the basket to her aunt and flung her arms around the doctor. "Oh, thank you, thank you!"

McCoy hugged her close and kissed her. "Now, I'm afraid it's time to say goodbye. You've got a starliner to catch."

She clung to him for an instant longer, then stood back resolutely, holding out her hand græely. "Goodbye, Doctor, and thank you for everything."

McCoy took the proffered hand and squeezed it gently. "'Bye, Honey. Be a good girl."

She turned to Kirk, repeating the gesture. Kirk looked at the extended hand and ignored it, swinging the child up into his arms. He plan' d a kiss on her cheek. "This needn't really be goodbye, you know. You can write... send tapes if you like. Would you like that?"

Her eyes lit up. "Oh, yes please."

"Good, that's settled." He set her carefully on her feet in front of the silent Vulcan, and stepped back.

Natalia eyed Spock a little shyly. "Can I write to you too, please?"

Spock inclined his head. "Of course, if it will give you pleasure."

She nodded wordlessly, then awkwardly positioned her fingers in a passable imitation of the Vulcan salute. She opened her mouth, her lower lip trembling slightly as the words came out in a rush. "G... goodbye, Mr. Spock. I'm sorry that I behaved so badly when we first met. I... didn't mean to hurt you... really I didn't. It was just... I'm sorry..."

As the tears started to her eyes, Spock felt a lump materialise in his throat, and on impulse bent to touch her hair. She reached up and flung her arms round his neck, and before the surprised gaze of his companions, he lifted her into his arms and stood holding her quietly until the tears subsided. At length she raised her head and met his eyes.

"Goodbye, Mr. Spock," she whispered. "You promise you'll answer my letters?"

"I promise," he assured her, lowering her to the floor. She stepped back and smiled at her new-found friends, then ran to join her aunt and uncle.

The three officers exchanged goodbyes with the Seymours, then stood watching as the small family disappeared through the doors.

McCoy heaved a regretful sigh. "You know, I'm gonna miss that kid. She's quite a girl."

"Yes," Kirk agreed quietly. "I hate goodbyes... that's why I purposely arranged for this parting to be quick, for her sake as well as ours. And you're right, Bones - she is quite a girl."

They both regarded the Vulcan.

"Come on, Spock," began McCoy enteringly. "Admit it. She got to you too, didn't she? You can't deny it."

Somewhat to their surprise, he didn't rise to the bait, but stood looking at the empty doorway. There was a trace of sadness in his voice as he answered. "I had no intention of denying it, Doctor. I must confess, I found her... intriguing. I, too, shall miss her."

They stood in sombre mood for several long seconds, then Kirk laid a hand gently on each of his friend's shoulders. "Let's go, gentlemen. We've got a report to file."

McCoy groaned in mock horror. "Jim Kirk, you've got no soul, that's your trouble."

Kirk steered them towards the door, grinning.

"No soul," repeated McCoy. "Here we are, in the depths of despair, and you... you..."

"Depths of despair?" echoed the Vulcan. "As usual, Doctor, you are being melodramatic and over-emotional..."

"Over-emotional? You're a fine one to talk! Who was it who...?"

Kirk grinned as the argument continued. Things were rapidly returning to normal. But, deep inside, he acknowledged the fact that, in the few short days that she'd been with them one small Human child had had a dramatic impact on all their lives. He doubted whether any of them would be able to forget a little girl named Natalia.

THE LEGENDS

Linda C. Wood

Now they're calling us 'legends', Bill,
What d'you think of that, eh?
We're only a couple of working actors, Bill,
Doing our jobs day by day.

I don't know about that, Leonard,
Our responsibilities we cannot shirk.
Long after we're dead and gone, Leonard,
They'll still be writing about Spock and Kirk.

It's the fans who've made us 'legends', Bill,
These wonderful people who kept the show alive,
With petitions and Cons and fan clubs, Bill,
Without them the legend never would survive.

So we'll keep the legend going, Leonard,
All these millions of people are right.
If they want us to be Legends we shall be, Leonard
And keep their hopes for tomorrow shining bright.

If we can show them the way to tomorrow, Bill,
When the philosophy of IDIC holds true,
Then we're proud to be part of that legend, Bill,
We shall live the legend through.

We'll show them the way to tolerance of all nations, Leonard,
Of different races, creed and land.
One day mankind will be united, Leonard,
In a glorious brotherhood of man.

Riley : What's the idea of telling everyone I'm an idiot?
Sulu : Sorry, I didn't know it was a secret.

BE THERE ANY LOGIC IN DENYING WHAT IS?

"When I feel friendship for you, I'm ashamed..."
Be there any logic in denying what is?
It is my way. My chosen way.
So it is... so it will be -
ALWAYS.

"It is good to hear a voice, especially yours."
How fascinating this experience.
How interesting... but
Where are you? What has happened to me?
IT SEPARATES US.

"How delightful to see you again."
The voice of my Captain.
He is calling to me - he is pleased to see me.
Must go to him, but I am so tired...

"My Commanding Officer, my friend."
My Captain is in trouble.
How do I get to him? Think!
Why can I not reason?

HE NEEDS ME.

"Captain! Are you all right? Captain!"
... Relief. You are all right.
I find it disquieting that that happened when it did.
You must procede with extreme caution.
I will double my pace... must reach you quickly.
I SENSE DANGER FOR YOU.

"Listen to me. Be with me. They cannot affect you.
My heart to your heart. I promise you. Be one with me."
Danger, you are in danger. I must
Protect you - help you... shield you...
From the illusions of death...
TRUST ME.

"You need a rest..."
Pain. You are hurting so!
What can I do to stop it?
To relieve the hurt - even a little?
LET ME HELP.

"Forget... forget..."
Oh the agony of this emotion, love!
And the joys... Is it worth this great pain?
This worry, this fear. Does it compensate?
...YES.

AT YOUR SIDE
It is almost as if I have always been there.
I WILL BE...
ALWAYS.

Alinda Alain